

community

The Newsletter of the Community Church of Boston
A Peace and Justice congregation since 1920

April 2008

news

Thoughts on Passover and Collective Liberation

by Jason Lydon, Congregational Director

Dear friends and members... As we struggle through our organizing against the war, racism, and capitalism, this month we have the opportunity to turn to stories of liberation. We start this journey by looking at Passover and the journey of the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and in search of freedom. The Liberation Seder we have been holding every year for quite some time is my favorite holiday we share together as a community. For those who have not attended in the past, I encourage you to consider joining us this year on April 20th.

The Passover story begins with the Israelites in bondage, slaves to the Egyptian rule. It gets better from there as the community comes together and finds strength in struggle. Through faith, community uprising, and, as the tradition goes, the hand of God, the Israelites fled from their persecution. Throughout the struggle God releases ten plagues on the Egyptians. During the course of the Ten Plagues Moses, the liberator of the Israelites, went to Pharaoh over and over again, trying to convince him to free the Israelites. Each time Pharaoh denied the request. Pharaoh saw the incredible gain he accrued from the slave labor of the Israelites; he was unwilling to give it up. When the last plague came, the taking of the first-born sons, Pharaoh finally agreed to free the Israelites. This choice by the Pharaoh was quickly rebuked as he sent his soldiers after the newly freed Israelites. The story continues as God opened the waters of the Red Sea for the Israelites to pass through and then crashed the waters down on the Egyptian soldiers, drowning them beneath the waves. After generations of slavery the Israelites were finally free.

We need our liberation stories. We need to turn to those things that inspire us to create the world we think is possible. The Israelites spent generations in slavery

but because of their faith (and some pretty incredible tactics by their God) they were able to survive through their suffering and come out the other side. We need to find what our faith is and what liberation stories work for each of us so that we too can survive our current systems and come out the other side.

It is also important for us to turn this story around some. While we are organizing in our communities of resistance and while we are suffering at the hands of state and corporate oppression we must see who we stand on top of. I know I would rather see myself as one of the Israelites running through the parted sea to safety, but what about the times that I am one of the Egyptian soldiers? As a US citizen in a time of global imperialism I live in the privileged bounty like the Egyptians (of the story) did. Whenever I don't recognize the power of privilege I act like the Egyptian soldiers.

The opportunity we have with the story of Passover is to see the ways we are marginalized and the ways that we marginalize others. Reading Biblical stories requires us to read from as many angles as possible. There is a tool in dream reading that tells us we are each player in our dream is a representative of ourselves. We can use this tool for reading the ancient stories. How do aspects of ourselves exist within each character? What can we learn from all sides of the story? This is a challenge to ourselves as we refocus our energies to end this war in Iraq, the occupation of Palestine, the internment of 2.4 million people in U.S. prisons, and the list goes on. Our liberation struggles are acts of divinity, let us lift them up and continue to grow in our quest for collective liberation.

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF BOSTON



Sunday Service & Speakers Forum

in Lothrop Auditorium
Sundays at 11:00am

April 6th

PALMER LEGARE

*"Strategies to Shut Down the
School of Assassins"*

April 13th

LEE FICH

"Liberation Seder"

April 20th

**Attys. MANIQUE W. BLOOM
& JEREMY A. ROBBINS**

"Torture, Rendition and Guantanamo"

April 27th

KLARE ALLEN

*"The Struggle Against the Bio-Lab
Continues"*

CCB Board Meeting

The Board of Directors met on March 20, 2008.

Following are highlights of the meeting.

The following board members and guests were present: David Broeg, Mary Ann Cromer, Selma Ganz, Dick Keshishian, John MacLeod, Virginia Pratt, Ron Shaprio, Dean Stevens, Jason Lydon, *Congregational Director*, Dick Crowley, Marty Lerman

Congregational Director's Concerns: Jason announced that CCB has expanded its website. People will be informed on what is happening at the Church throughout the week and the site will soon have recordings of the Sunday services.

There will be an open house at CCB on Monday evening, April 7, to which all tenants and groups who rent space in the building are invited to attend. The purpose of the event is to acquaint others with the goals and endeavors of the Church.

Justice School Report: The newly promulgated Justice School donation process is proceeding satisfactorily. A young people's version of "A Peoples History of the United States" will be a possible textbook to serve the class. The idea of a fundraiser to purchase twelve copies of the book for the Justice School library is probable.

By-Laws Committee: Marty Lerman gave a report outlining the various amendments proposed for the CCB by-laws. After a change in wording of a sentence, the board decided to call a congregational meeting on May 4 for the membership to approve the by-laws amendments.

Financial Concerns: Ron presented a comprehensive report on the current financial position of the Church, emphasizing that income is down again. The pledge drive for 2008 will begin during the middle of April.

Various Concerns: Dick Crowley has agreed to construct a "sandwich board" to advertise the Sunday programs and other related events.

The Church is now accepting nominations for the 2008 Sacco-Vanzetti Award for Social Justice.

The board retreat will be held on Saturday, April 26, at the Peace Abbey in Sherborn.

The next meeting of the board will be held on Thursday, April 17, 2008 at 7:15pm at the home of Selma Ganz. Members and friends of the Church are invited to attend.

-Dick Keshishian, Clerk

Seeking Board Member Nominations

The CCB is looking to fill three positions on the Board of Directors, to replace members whose term will expire. The elections for board members will take place at the Annual Meeting in June. If you are interested in nominating someone who, as stated in the by-laws, has been a member of our church for at least a year, please bring that name to a member of the Nominating Committee: Marty Lerman, Kevin Devine, or Gwen O'Brien.

It's Time to Recall the Sub-prime Loans

by Virginia Pratt

Recent reports on the rate of foreclosure are staggering. With the numbers rising so quickly, one has to ask why. Certainly the problem appears to be systemic. It may help to think about how the mortgage industry and process for getting a mortgage has changed over the last decade or two. There have been dramatic shifts in lending practices with the emergence of large national sub-prime lenders, as well as the use of the internet and computer programs. Prior to the wide use of the internet, applicants went to local banks and lending institutions to apply in person for loans. This application process was often lengthy and cumbersome. The applicant had to provide pay-stubs, W2s, tax returns, a credit reports, and proof of savings. Mortgage applications are now largely handled through a computer process or over the phone in a fraction of the time.

As the values of homes rose, real estate came to be viewed as a way to get rich quick. New loan products were developed. Application processes were streamlined and traditional requirements waived. Lenders competed for business by offering lower rates. Real estate agencies and brokers pledged to close deals quickly. Slogans such as "why rent when you can own" predominated. The general perception was that home values could only go up. With this perception came the

belief that you couldn't go wrong investing in real estate and that even if it was a stretch people should try to own as it would pay off in the end.

Traditional requirements, such as a down payment and saving came to be seen as stumbling blocks to the socially accepted goal of homeownership. Sub-prime lenders compensated for their risk by charging higher fees and interest. Mortgage brokers were compensated for generating business for the sub-prime market. Potential homeowners were urged to move quickly in the "red hot market." Homeowners were also bombarded with offers to refinance. As home values climbed homeowners were encouraged to consolidate their debt, roll their credit cards and car loans into their mortgage, and get cash out for renovations, their children's college education, and vacations. People in communities of color were targeted for abusive high cost sub-prime loans. Anyone questioning the terms of the loans was generally told not to worry as they would simply refinance before the interest rate rose. These same people and communities now face high rates of foreclosure and continued threat of foreclosure. [...]

*To read the conclusion to Virginia's article,
please visit the new CCB website:
<http://communitychurchofboston.org>*

Obituary: John O'Brien, 1930-2008



It is with great sadness that we share the news of our dear friend, and longtime CCB member, John O'Brien's passing. After surviving for several years with a form of lymphoma, he died in his Mission Hill home on March 5th of pancreatic cancer.

John has been lifting hearts for years with his unique brand of theater, always filled with social consciousness and sharp wit. As a playwright, he created works that included a one-act play that was awarded a \$10,000 prize from the National Endowment for the Arts. He was also a tireless activist and dedicated member of our community.

In addition to his wife, daughter, and two former wives, John leaves two sons, Thomas of Oneonta, N.Y., and David of Amherst; three grandsons; and a granddaughter.

CCB Congregational Retreat RESCHEDULED!!

Due to the large number of people who cannot attend the March 8th retreat and due to our tragic loss of John O'Brien our retreat has been postponed.

The new date for the retreat is Saturday, April 26th from 10:00am until 4:00pm at the Peace Abbey in Sherborn, MA. Thank you all for your patience.



Contact the church if you need transportation.

Our Purpose

Community Church of Boston is a free community of women and men united for the study and practice of universal religion, seeking to apply ethical ideals to individual life and the democratic and cooperative principle to all forms of social and economic life.

Staff

Jason Lydon, *Congregational Director*
Joo Young Choi, *Director of Children/Youth SJE Program*
Mark Laskey, *Office Manager*
Luis Alonzo Guzman, *Custodian & Cook*
Xinli Xu, *Bookkeeper*
Jim Casteris, *Superintendent*

Board of Directors

Dean Stevens, *President*
Mary Ann Cromer, *Vice President*
Ron Shapiro, *Treasurer*
Dick Keshishian, *Clerk*

Christina Braidotti, David Broeg,
Selma Ganz, John MacLeod, Virginia Pratt



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