

community news

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

June 2009

The Abolition Movement: Creating Alternatives

by Jason Lydon, Congregational Director

Dear friends and members... It is hard to believe that the 2008-2009 season is already coming to an end. We have had an incredible season. Numerous members of our congregation have shared with us as Sunday speakers; new and inspiring organizations such as WILPF and Press Pass TV have joined our space; we've welcomed additional members to join our church, and our outreach beyond the walls of the building continues to expand. This has been yet another beautiful year.

Last year we chose to close the season with three Sundays dedicated to educating ourselves about the far reaching impacts of the prison industrial complex (PIC). The list of speakers and topics we wanted to cover were so expansive we could not possibly cover it all in one short month. We have decided to use this closing month as another opportunity to further educate our selves and inspire community action against the many tentacles of the PIC. Because we only have three Sundays to continue the discussion this year, we are also organizing a number of events during the month of June at the church to deepen our greater Boston communities' analysis of the PIC. Look for more information inside the newsletter.

I used the cover letter last June to define the term prison industrial complex. This year I wanted to share a little more explanation of the term and movement for abolition. The movement for the abolition of the PIC is not simply about tearing down the walls and cages that lock up 2.4 million people in our country. The movement for abolition is about responding proactively to the systems of violence that permeate our society. These systems of violence include poverty, white supremacy, capi-

talism, hetero-patriarchy, able-ism, Zionism, and all the manifestations of oppression. When we work to secure adequate housing and water for all people, we are also working alongside the abolition movement. When we work to end the Israeli settler state, we are working toward PIC abolition. Campaigns to ban the box about past convictions on job applications are part of the abolition movement. When we choose not to call the police but rather communicate within our communities about the impacts of interpersonal violence, from partner abuse to gun shootings, we are working within the abolition movement. Abolition is not about one particular campaign or struggle. The abolition of chattel slavery was not complete with the passage of the 13th amendment or the end of the Civil War. The movement for abolition that we are in now is an extension of the same movement Nat Turner, Harriet Tubman, and John Brown were leaders of.

Abolition is about creation. As we break down the power of state surveillance and policing we must also bring to life alternatives. These alternatives are already being born out of communities most impacted by the violence of the PIC (people of color, poor people, incarcerated people, formerly incarcerated people, gender non-conforming people, and others). Abolition is about possibility, honest critique, and intentional relationship building. Let us take the month of June to discover ways we can challenge the far reaches of the PIC. Please try on this idea of abolition if it is new to you. Please take time to dialogue with others and help us live our commitment to justice most authentically.

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF BOSTON



Sunday Service & Speakers Forum

in Lothrop Auditorium
Sundays at 11:00am

June 7th

DR. VIVIANE SALEH-HANNA

**“Uncovering the Global and Historical
Impacts of the Prison Industrial Complex”**

June 14th

JASON LYDON

**“Religion, Theology, and the
Prison Industrial Complex”**

June 21st

*Annual Julius & Ethel Rosenberg
Commemoration*

SUSAN MORTIMER & BARBARA DOUGAN

**“Making Families Pay: The Unseen
Cost of Incarceration”**

CCB Board Meeting

The Board of Directors met on May 21, 2009

Following are highlights of the meeting.

The following board members were present: Christina Braidotti, David Broeg, Kevin Devine, Dick Keshishian, John MacLeod, Nancy Messom, Virginia Pratt, Lenny Shames. Guests included Jim Casteris, Dick Crowley, Marty Lerman.

Congregational Director's Report: Jason asked that the clerk read the report in his absence, and later in consultation between them, asked that certain points be printed in the newsletter.

Jason thanked Virginia Pratt and Betsy Gynn for sharing feedback on the fundraising letter language and to Dick K. for doing the mailings for the upcoming congregational meeting and the pledge drive.

Jason met with Suren Moodliar to discuss a cam-

paign on which the latter has been working with others about the racial disparities in water access in Boston. Residents of Roxbury, Mattapan and Dorchester are more likely to have their water turned off than those from Beacon Hill and the South End.

Many thanks to those who participated in the Mothers' Day Action organized by *Resist The Raids*. Another action will take place on Fathers' Day.

Jason met with Susan Mortimer and discussed the idea of making CCB membership available to those incarcerated in Massachusetts prisons. A variety of questions and ideas arose -- principally sending out a monthly letter, prisoners writing about their reflections for the newsletters and printed talks taken from Sunday morning programs.



Building Committee: Jim Casteris consulted with Henry Putman, a real estate developer and manager who has done much pro bono work for the Church, along with a group of sub-contractors who examined the CCB roof and estimated the cost of repairs at approximately \$35,000 to \$40,000.

Financial Matters: The treasurer reviewed the CCB Balance Sheet as of April 30, 2009, and discussed several items including bank transfers and line items pertaining mainly to rental income. Losses from PAX funds amounted to \$6,000 during the first quarter of 2009.

Various Concerns: Marty Lerman, Program Committee chair, announced that no nominations have been received to date for the Sacco-Vanzetti Award for Social Justice. Discussion followed on various ideas and methods on nominating in the future.

A fast will be held at Old South Church in Copley Square sponsored by Kip Tiernan and Poor Peoples United Fund to take place on the following dates and times: June 1st, 12pm-6:30pm; June 2nd, 10:30am-6:30pm; and June 3rd, 10:30am-6:30pm.

Dick Crowley presented a brief report on the present status of the John O'Brien Library, stating that work was underway and the collection of materials was progressing at a moderate pace.

The annual CCB summer picnic will be held on August 22nd (rain date August 23rd) at the home of Lenny Shames in Watertown.

The next meeting of the board is scheduled for Thursday, June 18, 2009 at 7:15pm. Members and friends of the Church are invited to attend.

-Dick Keshishian, Clerk

2009 Sacco & Vanzetti Award for Social Justice Update

It is time again to submit nominations for CCB's annual Social Justice Award, to be selected by the congregation at its Annual Meeting on June 21st. Keep in mind the history of the church and our ideals as you consider a candidate who (or organization which) has made significant contributions to the struggle for social justice. Past unsuccessful choices may definitely be renominated.

Nominations should be submitted to the church office, by email or "snail mail" no later than June 14th. As before, send the name and a short description of your nominee. You will have an opportunity to speak about your candidate at the meeting itself; prior "campaigning" is discouraged! Remember that our by-laws prohibit absentee voting.

Relating to our annual award ceremony, we received this message from Alan Clemence after delivering last year's award to the house of recipient Jim Harney:

I am now back home in Maine. The Sacco & Vanzetti Award arrived safely at Jim and Nancy's house this evening around 9:00 p.m. It was nice to talk to Nancy and two of Jim's sisters. I told them about the wonderful event in Boston today, and they were grateful to hear of all the love and support coming from folks at Community Church. They also expressed gratitude that Jim was being honored and praised before his death, as opposed to after his passing--when such honor and praise would not be part of his actual life.

Film Screening – Pride Week Event

“Cruel and Unusual”

**Tuesday, June 9th, 7:00pm
at the Community Church**

This film follows the lives of transgender people incarcerated in the United States prison/jail system. This film looks at the realities of prison rape, abuse, and violent trans-phobia. There are 2.4 million people incarcerated in the U.S. Use this day during Pride Week to educate yourself about part of the queer/trans community so often hidden from view!

This event is sponsored by the Community Church of Boston, Mass. Transgender Political Coalition, Mass. Transgender Legal Advocates, TransCEND, BAGLY, the Network/La Red, and Healing Our Land.

Rally and Speak Out for CORI Reform

**Wednesday June 3rd, 10-12:30pm
State House Steps**

Do you or someone you know have a CORI? Have you been denied a job or housing because of a criminal record? Do you agree that the CORI system is unfair and should be reformed? Then stand up and speak out! Join the Boston Workers Alliance and allies at the State House to push for CORI reform in 2009!

Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women by Victoria Law

**Monday, June 15th, 6:30pm
at the Community Church**

Vikki Law will come and join us from New York to talk about her incredible (I've read it, it's a vital read) book. *Resistance Behind Bars* is determined to challenge and change the oversight of women's resistance by anti-prison organizing. As it examines daily struggles against appalling prison conditions and injustices, *Resistance* documents both collective organizing and individual resistance among women incarcerated in the U.S. Emphasizing women's agency in resisting the conditions of their confinement through forming peer education groups, clandestinely arranging ways for children to visit mothers in distant prisons and raising public awareness about their lives, *Resistance* seeks to spark further discussion and research into the lives of incarcerated women and galvanize much-needed outside support for their struggles.

CCB 2009 Picnic

**Saturday, August 22nd
Watertown, MA**

This year's picnic will be held at the home of Lenny Shames, 81 Nyack Street, Watertown. Bring a favorite dish!



Accessible by #73 and #71 busses from Harvard Square. For directions or ride information call: 617-926-0088

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*
Mark Laskey, *Office Manager*
Luis Alonzo Guzman, *Custodian & Cook*
Xinli Xu, *Bookkeeper*
Jim Casteris, *Superintendent*

Board of Directors

John MacLeod, *President*
David Broeg, *Vice President*
Virginia Pratt, *Treasurer*
Dick Keshishian, *Clerk*

Kevin Devine, Nancy Messom, Susan Mortimer,
Matt Osborn, Leonard Shames



DATED MATERIAL
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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COMMUNITY CHURCH OF BOSTON

