

community

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

September 2013

news

From Curiosity to Investigation to Action

by Linda Jenkins, Congregational Director

Recently, I had the occasion to read one of the first newsletters after my predecessor, Jason Lydon, began his service here. It was a 2005 edition. I was curious to see what I might recognize in this small glimpse of what CCB community life was like then.

What I noticed with great interest is that he and I both shared a vision or hope for CCB at the beginning of our time here. That hope was (and is, for me) for a Social Action Committee that is robust, energizing, cohesive - alive! He and I both arrived here and saw that there wasn't something like that happening. It isn't happening now. Since I arrived here, I have heard this aspiration expressed by both long-time and relatively new community members as well.

Community members and I have tried to invite, encourage, challenge and attract community members to come together to see what we could do to take steps toward this goal. Granted there have been some huge distractions, both internal and external. Each of us would probably describe the details in different ways.

I am curious about this apparent discrepancy, *not unique to this community*, this disjunction between the value we hold, the goal we embrace and what we do. What interests me today is how this relates to an essay that recently circulated around the local activist community: **Andrea Smith's "The Problem of Privilege"**. (We'll put copies of this article out on the literature table and it can be mailed to those of you who can't get it that way. Please ask us!) Here is the first paragraph of her essay:

In my experience working with a multitude of anti-racist organizing projects over the years, I frequently found myself participating in various workshops in which participants were asked to reflect on their gender/race/sexuality/class/etc. privilege. These workshops had a bit of a self-help orientation to them: "I am so and so, and I have x privilege." It was never quite clear what the point of these confessions were. It was not as if other participants did not know the confessor in question had her/his proclaimed privilege. It did not appear that these individual confessions actually led to any political projects to dismantle the structures of domination that enabled their privilege. Rather, the confessions became the political project themselves.

Andrea Smith goes on to say, among other things, that this approach has several roots, one of which is the social preference of the dominant culture for focus on the individual and on individualism. It's something to which we are all more or less conditioned and which requires deliberate intentionality and effort to change.

In our congregation, many if not all of us are doing good social justice work and it isn't unusual to see each other at social justice events, though our participation there was not coordinated. And maybe shouldn't be. Why is that? I think it's worth an investigation together into who we are and why we act the way we do, with the goal, for me at least, of being open to doing something about it, because as Andrea Smith says in this essay: **"...Political projects of transformation necessarily involve a fundamental reconstitution of ourselves..."** This is the anti-oppression work to which I believe many, if not all, in this community aspire. We are all, of course, very different from each other, and this congregation, more than almost any other group I've known, embraces those differences. This is not about being the same, but of going beyond **"the response to structural racism [which] became an individual one - individual confession at the expense of collective action. Thus the question becomes, how would one collectivize individual transformation?"** (Ibid.)

This fall, our Sunday Services will focus, in part at least, on anti-oppression work, out in the world and also within our community. In addition to beginning to look at the kind of anti-oppression work discussed by Andrea Smith's work, we will hear about the work of Gene Sharp, the East Boston author of voluminous writings that were inspirational and foundational to the Arab Spring. At 84 years old, Mr. Sharp has been nominated this year by the American Friends Service Committee to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his work, which is done through The Einstein Institute that he founded. What is perhaps unique about his work is that it provides a systematic approach to confronting oppression non-violently. We will be hearing from Jamila Raqib, the Executive Director of the Einstein Foundation and co-worker of Gene Sharp for 11 years. We have other exciting speakers scheduled and I am looking forward to re-gathering on September 8 to begin our season of regular services. Please don't forget to bring a water sample with you for our Homecoming Water Ceremony then!

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF BOSTON



Sunday Service & Speakers Forum

September 8th

LINDA JENKINS

“Homecoming Sunday:
Water Communion”

September 15th

SERGIO REYES

“Chile: The Other September 11th”

September 22nd

GARY GOLDSTEIN

“History of Nuclear Weapons
and Current Disarmament Issues”

September 29th

LEWIS RANDA

“Just a Dream That Some of Us Had:
The Story of the Peace Abbey”

Rescheduled Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, September 22nd, 1:30pm
(following the Sunday Service)

Our rescheduled Annual Congregational Meeting will happen on after the service on September 22nd. Unfortunately we did not meet quorum in June, so we had to re-schedule the meeting.

We have important work to do, and it is essential that every member participate in the discussion and decision-making process as fully as possible! We hope you can all be there!

CCB Board Meeting

*The Board of Directors met on August 22, 2013
Following are highlights of the meeting.*

Congregational Director's Report: The Congregational Director submitted a report in which she detailed her activities during the summer months.

Financial: The treasurer presented the Church's Profit & Loss Budget Performance of July, 2013. She discussed Rental Income, Fundraising, Annual Fund Drive, Salaries, Benefits, CCB Programming, and various line items.

Building Committee: Jim Casteris, Rodney Burston and Dean Stevens are working to cover and insulate the leaky alleyway windows with plywood and styrofoam. Rodney has painted the foyer and plans to come upstairs and paint the auditorium doors as well.

The year 2017 fast approaches, when Globe Cafe's lease runs out. There should be a beginning of a discussion amongst the leadership about the new lease, and how to negotiate it to our best advantage. Henry Putman has ideas and tremendous experience on this front and would be glad to meet with the board.

The next board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 11, 2013 at 7:00pm.

- Dick Keshishian, Clerk

Save The Dates!

The **Program Committee** will meet on Thursday, September 5th, 7pm, at the Boston Public Library in the McKim Conference Room (enter on Dartmouth Street, and the room is on the right). The Committee will be meeting the first Thursdays of the month, location tba.

The next **CCB Board Meeting** will be on Wednesday, September 11th, 7pm, at the Boston Public Library in Conference Room #4 (enter on Boylston Street, down one flight of stairs.)

The deadline for **October Newsletter submissions** will be Monday, September 3rd. Please email material to: info@commchurch.org

Marty's Marvelous Book Bash

by Dean Stevens, President

The first thing you'll notice, when you come back to the auditorium this fall, is an enormous collection of books on tables at the back of the room. Perhaps 1500 new books, and a lot of used ones in boxes that we couldn't fit on the table.

They are what Marty Lerman left us. For all of the years (approx. 1972 to 2012) that he was a key member of our church, he maintained a book table during Sunday services. He brought a different set of books in each Sunday, to match the topic and speaker. Marty purchased books, calendars, pamphlets and monographs, and maintained the table. The venture was a benefit for the church, but he plowed most of the proceeds into more book purchases. For many years Marty also chaired the Program Committee, and served on the board in several capacities, as did Dian Lerman, both of them with this church through all these years, through good times and bad. In early 2012, Marty passed on. .

The collection of books Marty left us is a tribute to a lifetime of steadfast dedication to the nuts-and-bolts work of radical social justice. We did not know the scope of his book project until they all came out of CCB's closets, and were supplemented by the books he stored at home, which came to us when the house was sold this summer. And we did not know about the extent of his steadfast work, until at his memorials we heard from the myriad of organizations that he served as a board member and volunteer.

The book table has a long history with The Community Church of Boston. The archives through the years tell of a Book Table Committee, comprised of several people, that carted boxes of books and pamphlets to the various auditoriums where we used to meet. The Committee gave a monthly report to the board that

included their earnings, titles that were especially popular at the time, and so forth. We printed many sermons and talks given by various repeat presenters over the years, and sold them for 15 cents or so at the book table. The table was a significant source of income for the church, and for frequent CCB speakers (such as Scott Nearing, Noam Chomsky, or Howard Zinn). This practice continued all the way into the late 80s, when Marty became the Book Table Committee (of One).

I hope I'm wrong when I predict that the paper book will join the LP, CD, and the VHS and so forth in the Living Museum of Obsolete Media. What we certainly know is that there is no one among us to take up where Marty left off. And to that purpose, we are displaying the collection, offering them for sale first to you, for whatever price you might be able to offer, checks payable to Community Church of Boston, in the collection basket or handed to Virginia Pratt, our treasurer. We will hold an event this fall, date to be determined, wine and cheese and music, that will be a kickoff to a yard sale and book fair, to do our best to downsize this book collection. We have already selected some which will become part of our permanent library collection in the front of the auditorium, focusing on CCB speakers, causes, and areas of interest to our community. When we are done, the remaining books will go to worthy places that can use them, such as the Prison Book Project, The Aids Action Committee's Boomerangs stores, the Anarchist Book Fair, and perhaps other places, suggestions welcome.

Volunteers interested in helping with this project, or with ideas, please contact Dean Stevens: dean@deanstevens.com.

Marty Lerman, Presente!!!

Former Councilor Chuck Turner back in Boston

Two years after he entered the U.S. Penitentiary in Hazelton, W. Va., former City Councilor Chuck Turner has returned with a burning desire to tackle black America's most pressing problems.

Turner was convicted in 2011 of accepting a bribe and making false statements to FBI agents in a court case that many observers said never should have gone to trial.

In January 2011, he began serving a three-year sentence at Hazelton. In July, Turner was released early on good behavior to a Boston halfway house.

Turner will remain under the supervision of the halfway house until January of next year. In the meantime, he is working out of Imani House, a Grove Hall nonprofit, to plan a convening of activists to strategize a new movement to better the lot of blacks in Boston.

Turner says he hopes to expand his conversation [...] to include representatives of the younger generation and talk about creating a new system of values that helps build community.

(The Bay State Banner; August 7, 2013)

David Rovics in Concert!

Tuesday, October 15th, 8pm
at the
**Community Church
of Boston**

\$15 donation



David Rovics grew up in a family of classical musicians and became a fan of populist regimes early on. By the early 90's he was a full-time busker in the Boston subways and by the mid-90's he was traveling the world as a professional flat-picking rabble-rouser. These days David lives in Portland, Oregon and tours regularly on four continents, playing for audiences large and small at cafes, pubs, universities, churches, union halls and protest rallies. He will make you laugh, he will make you cry, he will make the revolution irresistible.

<http://davidrovics.com>

Our Purpose

Community Church of Boston is a free community 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

Linda Jenkins, *Congregational Director*

Mark Laskey, *Office Manager*

Xinli Xu, *Bookkeeper*

Luis Alonzo Guzman, *Custodian & Cook*

Rodney Burston, *Building Maintenance*

Board of Directors

Dean Stevens, *President*

Virginia Pratt, *Treasurer*

Dick Keshishian, *Clerk*

Jim Casteris, Mary Ann Cromer, Kevin Devine,

Nancy Messom, Susan Mortimer



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