

The Steeple



VOL 1 NO.6 February 1, 2009

First Parish in Framingham
Unitarian Universalist
A Welcoming Congregation

Staying In Touch

Notes From the Pastor

"Love" is the reflection theme this month at First Parish. The word is overused and trivialized, to be sure. "I love my new car" hardly helps us keep sacred this profound dynamic in human living. I am going to be taking some time this month to read and pray about love, and to discuss it with others. I am wanting to remember its meaning. I am wanting to celebrate it. I am wanting to bow to the mystery of the transformative power of love. I hope you will join me in this exploration.

The theme of the worship service on Feb. 8th is "love". Some ideas for entry points for "love reflections":

- Plan to spend one day intentionally loving everything you encounter, instead of only the things that feel good, or the things that are beautiful. Write about what that experience is like.
- Spend a day addressing everyone you encounter as "beloved" (including yourself)...at least within your own mind. Reflect on what that is like.
- Pick one situation in which you would normally enter with fear or an agenda or an attitude of "knowing what this is going to be like". Make an effort to still your mind and enter the situation with an open heart and wonder. Listen well and speak little. See how it goes.
- Pick one thing about yourself that you don't like, and instead of trying to change it, or ignore it, or beat yourself up about it...send all the love and acceptance

you can muster to that part of yourself.

- Practice random acts of kindness, anonymously.
- Choose a few books on "love" to read. There are many. Here are a few favorites of mine:

Perfect Love, Imperfect Relationships, John Welwood

I and Thou, Martin Buber

To Love and Be Loved, Sam Keen

The Power of Empathy, Arthur Ciaramicoli and Katherine Ketcham

An Ethic for Enemies : Forgiveness in Politics, Donald W Shriver Jr.

The Parables of Jesus in Christian Scripture

Facing the Lion, Being the Lion, Mark Nepo

If The Buddha Married, Charlotte Kasl

A Feminist Ethic of Risk, Sharon Welch

- If you live with children, begin a weekly tradition of honoring one person in the family each week or each month. Perhaps at Sunday afternoon dinner, the person being honored can wear a crown and get to pick the dessert. Go around the table and invite everyone to say something about that person that they admire.
- Pick someone that you find to be difficult. Write an essay about how much like that person you are.

Go well into this month Beloveds!
Rev. Kathleen Hepler

Sunday Worship

FEBRUARY 1

9:15 & 11:00 AM Worship

My Sister's Keeper

Rev. Marta Flanagan is interim minister of the Unitarian Church in Montpelier, VT. Prior to Montpelier Marta served our churches in Salem MA and Portsmouth NH. For her sermon Marta will draw on the Hebrew Bible, her grandmother and Barack Obama.

Rev. Marta Flanagan

FEBRUARY 8

9:15 & 11:00 AM Worship

On Becoming St. Valentine

Love is the theme at First Parish this month (to be honest it seems to be the theme every month!)...an invitation for everyone to be intentional in thinking, talking, learning, taking- time -for this most important human ability. What blocks the channels of love in our lives? What are some practices that attract the giving and receiving of love?

Rev. Kathleen Hepler

FEBRUARY 15

9:15 & 11:00 Worship

Who's Been Sleeping with the Gods?

Many scientists agree that our earth is in trouble due to the threat of global warming. In what way is the issue of global warming also a matter of spiritual concern? And what is an appropriate role for our religious institutions to play in response to this crisis?

Michelle LaGrave

FEBRUARY 22

9:15 & 11:00 AM Worship

Stories From Heaven

Very often here at First Parish, people informally share stories of how their life is renewed by being a member at First Parish. These are often moving stories that remind us of why we exist. You won't want to miss this one!

We begin our stewardship drive with these reflections on how renewal and commitment are related.

From the Ministerial Intern

Dear Ones,

As of this writing, I have reached the halfway marker of my first year here at First Parish in Framingham. In reflecting on my experiences here thus far, I am left with a feeling of gratitude and a sense that First Parish is, indeed, a blessed community. I would like to share some of my observations and insights with you now, while they are still new and fresh from my relatively recent arrival, in the form of a list of gratitudes.

First, and most of all, I am grateful for the kindness and consideration of our children and youth which I have witnessed on such an incredibly consistent basis and which strengthens my faith in the future of Unitarian Universalism.

I am grateful for the warmth, positive energy, and welcome I have received from all.

I am grateful for the open acceptance of people of all abilities which I have also consistently witnessed and which exceeds mere tolerance.

I am grateful for the commitment to education and learning exhibited by the lay leadership in the Leadership Unlimited program.

I am grateful for and continually amazed by the energy, enthusiasm, dedication, and sheer strength of will shown by those involved in congregational social justice initiatives.

I am grateful for a staff who are so often joyous in their work, a group of people who have only added to my own sense of joy in my calling.

I am grateful for the laughter found and shared in our newly-formed young adult group.

I am grateful to be surrounded by beauty in all its forms, from the buildings and architecture, to the landscape, to the music, to the people.

Namaste,

Michelle

From the Canvass Committee

Renewing Our Commitment - Committing to Our Renewal

It's not quite time for our annual canvass campaign, but it is time to let you know about our plans for this year. The "Celebration Sunday" events that we've had over the last few years have been fun, but this year we are going to return to our more traditional approach: individual meetings with canvassers.

This approach seems like the best way to have the types of discussions that are vital to our community: Discussions about the important and interesting activities and groups across the parish – our new Free Medical Program, the Interfaith Hospitality Network, Belonging as a Religious Experience, Pies on the Common, and many more. These are all ways in which we can renew ourselves, which is part of what church is all about.

Keeping these opportunities alive, of course, requires each of us to renew our commitment to First Parish – our commitment to support our community with our time, our talents, and our treasure. Our theme for the Canvass Campaign this year is thus: Renewing our Commitment, and Committing to Our Renewal. This theme of renewal and commitment seems particularly appropriate with the presidential inauguration just behind us.

These personal visits and discussions will take place at the beginning of March; stay tuned for more updates about our plans. Please also let me know if you have any questions or suggestions about how to make this as successful as possible!

Rich Lawson
Chair of the Canvass Committee

Religious Education

A new semester is upon us in religious education and is off to a good start. All the classes have new teachers, so be sure to introduce yourself to your child's teachers. If you want to know more about the curricula that are being used, please contact me, and I'd be happy to talk with you.

Kathleen and I held a Children's Worship with the first through eighth graders to discuss the reasons for our move to having them in the beginning of every worship service and answer their questions. This change will begin on February 1st. I didn't want to shorten the time that the children are in class, so the schedule is slightly different from what it has been. For the 9:15 service, children will be dismissed from class at 10:30. For the 11:00 service, class will end at 12:15. Teachers will bring their classes up to Scott Hall, so you can plan on meeting your children in Coffee Hour. I ask for your patience and your spirit of adventure in this new format. It's an experiment that we're going to try. We truly believe that having the children in every service to share a bit of worship time with the whole congregation will be a positive experience for all ages, not just the children.

We will still have child participants in the service on the first Sunday of the month. Child participants greet people as they come in, hand out Orders of Service, ring the bell, light the chalice, and carry the collection plates during

the Offertory. Please contact me if your child would like to participate in this way. There is room for all who want to take part. It adds a sense of connection to the church for children who help in this way - this is indeed their church too.

As a way to connect children to one of our congregation's social justice endeavors, the children who braved the snowy weather on the Special Sunday (three-day weekend Sundays) in January learned about our Free Medical Program. Parishioner Ilene Hofrenning explained what the medical program is and why First Parish is offering it. Then the children industriously put together a box of toys and things to do for children while they wait for their parents to be seen by doctors. Now children who accompany their parents to their medical appointments will have something to do while they wait.

We will have another Special Sunday for first through sixth graders on February 15th (the beginning of school vacation week). Children younger than first grade will have their regular classes, and seventh and eighth graders will attend church.

If you have any questions or concerns about the religious education program, please feel free to contact me.

Julie Porter,
Director of Religious Education

A Message from Andrew Shenton

Dear friends:

I'm writing to thank you warmly for the kind gift you gave me as a leaving present. I have put the money towards a sat-nav for my car and am already reaping the rewards of less stressful driving! I greatly enjoyed my four-and-a-half years as Director of Music at First Parish and am in many ways sad to leave. It has been a pleasure to provide music for such a welcoming congregation. I would like to take this opportunity to say a special word of thanks to Trish Ramey who has worked tirelessly to provide music with the bell and chime choirs and the children and youth of the parish. I also want to express my heartfelt thank all the singers and performers who have given freely of their time and their talents in the service of the program - my work at First Parish would have been impossible without all of you and I am grateful. May 2009 bring you all peace and prosperity and may music be refreshment, sustenance and joy in your lives.

Sincerely,
Andrew Shenton

Congregational Pot Luck, February 6th

This is your opportunity to savor the culinary expertise of the First Parish staff as chefs Hepler, LaGrave, Porter, Baker and Moore prepare the main entrees for this wonderful evening of good food, camaraderie and family activities. Activities include a covenant group, story telling, family movement, a soul collage and multi-generational games. Participants will provide bread, salad and drinks.

When: evening of February 6th, where: Scott Hall. Call (508-872-3111) or email the office (office@uuframingham.org) to sign up.

From the Board of Assessors

Greetings from your Board of Assessors,

The Board and the Church Council met with Rev. Terasa Cooley, Mass Bay District Executive, Saturday, January 31, for a day of planning and strategizing. We felt it important to ask essential questions about First Parish in Framingham: "Who are we?" "What are we called to do?" Who is our neighbor?" Having Rev. Hepler as our Sr. Minister to share her wealth of ideas and spiritual depth in our ongoing planning process is energizing and affirming. In times of economic down-turn and of families with busy lives, we all must rethink how best to live our liberal religious values in our church and in our local and global communities.

Certainly you will hear more about our weekend as we share with you our discoveries and listen to your views. How can we continue to be faithful to our purpose and to the call from the god-spirit within us? We will want to hear your ideas so that we can become all that we can be as a congregation. Together we can draw from our spiritual sources in our continued creation and recreation of First Parish as a unique spiritual community.

Together the Board and the Church Council are leading change by listening to you and keeping our purpose as a religious institution in mind. Many leaders worked hard for many years to get us where we are today. The Board's partnership with the First Parish Church Council, with its enthusiasm and dedication under Pat Walker, has been significant in involving more committed people in day-to-

day operations. The Board can now develop and manage a visionary view of our mission—including the continued and necessary development of leaders. The planning from January 31 provides many reasons for us to come back to you and listen again to your ideas and dreams.

This year Board is involved in many areas in addition to planning. Here are just a few:

- Empowering a Stewardship Council, which includes a Canvass Committee and a Grant-writing Team (Rich Lawson)
- Developing a Personnel Handbook, which is in final approval stages, to make salaries and benefits more equitable (Jan Bolton)
- Compiling and updating a First Parish Policy Manual (Aimee Dalrymple)

This month the Board and the Finance Committee, together with the Church Council, begin planning for next year's budget. We will be looking for your input. Also, you will soon hear more about our annual canvass campaign and your opportunity to renew your commitments to First Parish in special ways. And speaking of commitments, First Parish depends on your regular pledge payments and your talents to build a thriving community. Do keep your contributions up-to-date.

Thanks for all that you do to make First Parish a unique religious place,

Pam Pierson, Chair
Board of Assessors

Membership Corner

Photo Directory

Since Lifetouch failed to take pictures for us in November we are back to the drawing board. Will we consider an in-house photo directory? Will we use another company? Who will offer their energy and input to make the photo directory happen? Please let me know if you are willing to help in this worthwhile endeavor.

Newcomer Orientation

The next Newcomer Orientation will be on Sunday March 8th from 2:30-4:30pm in the Huntley room. All newcomers are invited. This is an opportunity to meet Reverend

Kathleen Hepler, learn more about Unitarian Universalism, meet other newcomers, members and staff of First Parish and ask any questions. Babysitting and refreshments will be provided.

Please RSVP to Veena Baker, Membership Development Coordinator at membership@uuframingham.org or 508-872-3111 ext. 218.

Veena Baker
Membership Development Coordinator
membership@uuframingham.org

Around The Parish

Karen Hirshman is at Mary Ann Morse for rehab following her hip-replacement surgery. She would love to hear from you (508-433-4502) or see you (Rm 102).

Louise Rivers fractured her hip in a fall at home recently. She is now at Kathleen Daniels (508-872-8801) for rehab and would welcome cards, calls and visits (Rm 107).

Continued on page 5

Marking progress in her recuperation, **Janet Werner** was greeted with cheers recently when she surprised the Women's Alliance by joining them for their regular January meeting.

Following a two-week stint back at MGH at the beginning of the month, **Margie Carberry** is now at Youville Hospital in Cambridge, Room 211. Check with the hospital about visiting policy. Jim advises that any visitors go in pairs since Margie still has difficulty communicating.

We offer our deep sympathy to member **Donna Maxwell** and her family at the death of her father on January 5th.

We offer our deep sympathy to new member **Karen Charles** whose mother died over the holidays.

Roy Komack, a member of First Parish since 1972, passed away unexpectedly at home the evening of January 6th. For more information, please contact Connie Komack at 978-546-9660.

Bill Read is at Oak Knoll Health Care Center for observation and occupational therapy after experiencing a TIA at home late last week. He is doing well and should be home shortly.

Announcements, Dates & Events

Social Action

Where, oh, where has our rolling food bin gone?
Oh, where, oh, where can it be?
'Twas last seen outside of the minister's door.
No trace of it can we see!

The rolling food bin is placed in front of the Meeting House door on Sundays to accept donations of food for MetroWest Harvest. The rest of the time it lives in the robing room in the Meeting House. If anyone sees our lost bin, please guide it home! (It cost Social Action \$37, and our budget is small.)

Women's Alliance

The Women's Alliance program for this February will be "A Fun Movie with Pop Corn." Bring a sandwich, coffee and dessert will be served. For information call Susie Macdonald at 508-875-3372

Chancel Decorations

Donating flowers to decorate our Chancel on Sunday morning is a wonderful way to remember someone or celebrate something not to mention adding beauty to our Meeting House! I'm looking for someone for the following Sundays: Sunday February 8th, Sunday, February 15th and Sunday, February 22nd. Please let me know if you can help out with this.

Thanks! SusanJMoody@hotmail.com or 508-331-0752

Adult Ed Sunday Night Foreign Film

Up The Yangtze, 2007

93 minutes, NR (Not Rated)

Join us for tea and fortune cookies on the evening of Sunday, **February 15th at 7:30 pm** in the Huntley Rm to view this film by Canadian director Yung Chang. Modern China's demand for power to fuel the economic boom precipitates the Three Gorges Dam project to harness the Yangtze River. The film focuses on the social and cultural

upheaval of relocating two million people from their homes as well as the erasure of history and culture. Beautifully photographed views of China and peasant life.

Adopt a Plot

Don't you love the gardens and plantings, new and old, which are part of our First Parish campus. We do too, but we need help in maintaining these areas. Want to help? How about "adopting a plot". We have broken the identified gardens into plots. The adopter would weed, mulch, trim and anything else that is required to keep their adopted plot happy and healthy. The maintenance council will provide any financial assistance required, such as mulch, replacement plants... This is a concept that has been tried with much success along roadways and we think it can work for us as well. Interested or questions email the NEW maintenance mailbox:

maintenance@uuframingham.org or contact Beth Walton or Ed Ufring.

Green Sanctuary

In November of 2007, First Parish members and two NSTAR contractors replaced or upgraded most of the lighting at First Parish to use more energy efficient fluorescent lights. NSTAR paid 70% of the cost; First Parish paid \$1,600.

An analysis of one year's worth of utility bills shows that we have saved roughly 12,000 kilowatt hours of energy. The \$1,600 investment was recouped in less than a year.

Roots & Shoots

Our Roots & Shoots group met on Sat, Jan 24th to learn about birds and bats and make houses to attract them to our backyards. At every meeting, we like to get outside and check out the seasonal changes on our First Parish property, so we put on our boots and looked for nests in

Continued on page 6

the leafless trees. We learned that different types of birds and bats prefer specific types of houses, and we created quite a variety at our event. We'll be watching them closely to see who nests in them come spring! At my house, we are hoping that robins will join our chickadee and wren families this year.

Our next planned Roots & Shoots event will be on Sat, April 4th, and we will learn about invasive plant species. We are also considering a cross-country skiing/snowshoeing field trip, so check out the Weekly Update for news on that. For more information on Roots & Shoots, visit www.rootsandshoots.org. For more information our group at FPF, contact Aimee Dalrymple at 508-652-9946 or ADalrymple@alumni.duke.edu.

Guatemalan Jewelry

This month the Fountain Street Studios will feature special guest Rebecca Center with handcrafted Guatemalan jewelry and ornaments. Support a good cause and pick up a special Valentine's Day gift! Please join us for an informal open house Friday evening, February 6th from 5:30 to 8:30 pm. Refreshments will be served.

Visit: <http://www.FountainStreetStudios.com> for more information.

Heritage Chorale Open Rehearsal/Auditions

The Heritage Chorale invites interested singers to attend its Open Rehearsal on Tuesday, February 10, from 7:45 to 10:15. Auditions will take place following the rehearsal. Location: Scott Hall, First Parish Church in Framingham, 24 Vernon Street. Please see www.heritagechorale.org or call the Chorale's info-line at 508-270-3999 for more information.

Heritage Chorale

POPS CONCERT "DANCING THROUGH LIFE"

John Finney, Conductor

Darryl Hollister, Pianist

Sunday, February 8, 2009, 4:00 p.m.

Nevins Hall, Memorial Building

150 Concord Street (Route 126), Framingham.

All tickets are \$20.00 and include refreshments.

For more information on Heritage Chorale, please call the Info-line at 508-270-3999 or visit the website: www.heritagechorale.org

Mass Bay District News

www.mbdoua.org / 617-393-4216

Listening for Strength in Our Congregations

by Rev. Sue Phillips, Acting Director of Program Development

When something is not quite working in our congregations (a conflict perhaps, or a troubled church program), we have a tendency to focus on what is going wrong. We attend to the sticking point, throwing resources of time, emotional energy, and sometimes money to address the problem. A quick look at most Board or Parish Committee agendas attest to the fact that Unitarian Universalists tend to be a problem-solving people! No matter how good we are at problem solving, though, we regularly miss opportunities to concentrate on what is going right.

Appreciative Inquiry is a strategy that helps us get out of this problem trap, and invites us to concentrate on our strengths. Instead of trying to fix what isn't working, we turn our attention to doing more of what is already working well in our community. Appreciative Inquiry questions are always framed positively around affirmative topics. Questions like What do you value most about being part of our congregation? What do you think is making a positive difference in how we're working together as a committee? When you are being your best self, what qualities do you bring to your church work?

Appreciative Inquiry is a creative way of asking questions that nurtures collaboration and builds community. The process of listening builds dynamic relationships that in turn strengthen the congregation and the people in it.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about Appreciative Inquiry or other tools to help your congregation thrive see the Appreciative Inquiry Commons at <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/> or contact Rev. Sue Phillips at sPhillips@uua.org or 617-803-1116

UPCOMING AT MASS BAY DISTRICT

The Prophethood of All Believers: Sermon-Writing and Preaching for Lay People: February 21, 2009

Lay Pastoral Care Teams Training: March 21, 2009

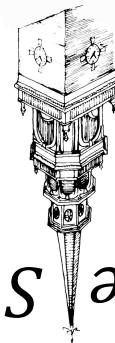
Seeking Wholeness in a Fragmented World, Spring Conference and Annual Meeting: April 25, 2009

A Note from the Editor

Deadline for the March Newsletter is: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20TH! Send your text to: editor@uuframingham.org.

February, 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1</p> <p>9:15 & 11:00 AM Church Service</p> <p>10:30 AM Chime Choir</p> <p>12:30 PM OWL</p> <p>12:30 PM The Earth's Imagination</p> <p>2:00 PM Square Dance</p> <p>7:00 PM YRUU</p>	<p>2</p> <p>6:00 PM ROUNDS</p> <p>7:00 PM MICAHA</p> <p>7:30 PM Meditation Group VB</p>	<p>3</p> <p>7:00 PM Anybody Can Paint</p> <p>7:00 PM Heritage Chorale</p>	<p>4</p> <p>9:30 AM Yoga</p> <p>11:30 AM Worship & Arts</p> <p>1:00 PM Stitches In Time</p> <p>6:00 PM Junior Youth Group</p> <p>6:30 PM Young Adult Group</p> <p>7:30 PM Church Council Meeting</p> <p>7:30 PM Bell Choir</p> <p>7:30 PM Evolution at 2009</p>	<p>5</p> <p>8:00 AM COFFEE AND MUFFINS</p> <p>5:00 PM The MetroWest Free Medical Program</p> <p>7:00 PM RE Council</p> <p>7:30 PM Board of Assessors</p>	<p>6</p> <p>1:00 PM Metrowest Free Medical Program</p> <p>6:00 PM Multigenerational Feast & Fun</p>	<p>7</p> <p>10:00 AM Silver Grays</p>
<p>8</p> <p>9:15 11:00 AM Church Service</p> <p>10:30 AM Chime Choir</p> <p>12:30 PM OWL</p> <p>12:30 PM The Earth's Imagination</p> <p>7:00 PM YRUU</p>	<p>9</p> <p>12:00 PM Women's Alliance</p> <p>6:00 PM ROUNDS</p> <p>7:30 PM Meditation Group VB</p> <p>7:30 PM FCNS Board Meeting</p> <p>7:30 PM Finance Committee</p>	<p>10</p> <p>3:30 PM Brownies</p> <p>7:00 PM Anybody Can Paint</p> <p>7:00 PM Covenant-JB</p> <p>7:00 PM Heritage Chorale</p> <p>7:30 PM Stitches In Time</p>	<p>11</p> <p>9:30 AM Yoga</p> <p>1:00 PM Stitches In Time</p> <p>6:30 PM Young Adult Group</p> <p>7:30 PM Bell Choir</p> <p>7:30 PM Evolution at 2009</p>	<p>12</p> <p>8:00 AM COFFEE AND MUFFINS</p> <p>5:00 PM The MetroWest Free Medical Program</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p>
<p>15</p> <p>9:15 & 11:00 AM Church Service</p> <p>10:30 AM Chime Choir</p> <p>12:30 PM OWL</p> <p>12:30 PM The Earth's Imagination</p> <p>6:30 PM Adult RE Film Series <i>Up The Yangtze</i></p> <p>7:00 PM YRUU</p>	<p>16</p> <p>OFFICE CLOSED - HOLIDAY</p> <p>6:00 PM ROUNDS</p> <p>7:30 PM Maintenance Council</p>	<p>17</p> <p>7:00 PM Anybody Can Paint</p> <p>7:00 PM Heritage Chorale</p>	<p>18</p> <p>9:30 AM Yoga</p> <p>1:00 PM Stitches In Time</p> <p>6:00 PM Junior Youth Group</p> <p>6:30 PM Young Adult Group</p> <p>7:00 PM Leadership Unlimited</p> <p>7:30 PM Bell Choir</p> <p>7:30 PM Religion, Revolution & Se-cession</p>	<p>19</p> <p>8:00 AM COFFEE AND MUFFINS</p> <p>5:00 PM The MetroWest Free Medical Program</p> <p>6:30 PM Parents & Others</p> <p>7:30 PM Intern Committee</p>	<p>20</p> <p>1:00 PM Metrowest Free Medical Program</p>	<p>21</p> <p>6:00 PM Uncommon Coffee House</p>
<p>22</p> <p>9:15 & 11:00 AM Church Service</p> <p>10:30 AM Chime Choir</p> <p>12:30 PM OWL</p> <p>12:30 PM The Earth's Imagination</p> <p>7:00 PM YRUU</p>	<p>23</p> <p>6:00 PM ROUNDS</p> <p>7:30 PM Meditation Group VB</p>	<p>24</p> <p>3:30 PM Brownies</p> <p>7:00 PM Anybody Can Paint</p> <p>7:00 PM Covenant-JB</p> <p>7:00 PM Heritage Chorale</p> <p>7:30 PM Stitches In Time</p>	<p>25</p> <p>9:30 AM Yoga</p> <p>1:00 PM Stitches In Time</p> <p>6:30 PM Young Adult Group</p> <p>7:30 PM Bell Choir</p> <p>7:30 PM Religion, Revolution & Se-cession</p>	<p>26</p> <p>8:00 AM COFFEE AND MUFFINS</p> <p>5:00 PM The MetroWest Free Medical Program</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>



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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ASSISTANT

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DIR. OF CHILDREN'S CHOIR, YOUTH

ENSEMBLE, BELL CHOIR

MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

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