



# Bridging

February 2007

The Newsletter of the First Parish Church, Bridgewater, MA

## "Work in the World"

I have just returned from Meadville Lombard, the Unitarian Universalist seminary in Chicago where I took a course on social justice led by the Rev. Richard Gilbert. Rev. Gilbert is known for his work in social justice, and with good reason. This was an inspiring course, for me and all my fellow-minister classmates. Our week together included a silent vigil for peace on the corner of 57th Street and Woodlawn Avenue on Thursday, January 11 to respond to the proposed escalation of troops in Iraq. The timing of the class in early January was also perfect in terms of preparing ministers for social justice work, as we celebrate Martin Luther King Day in January and Black History Month in February, and look ahead to Women's History Month as well as Social Justice Month in March.

Rev. Gilbert's view on social justice is that it is a 'prophetic imperative'. That is, work in the world is not something that we can take or leave, but something that we as people of faith must do. Religion cannot address only the personal and internal but also the public and external. While we must respect division of church and state, we must also remember that religion and politics are 'as one seamless garment'.

So we are called to work in the world. Gilbert also reminds us to ground that work in our liberal theology. Whatever theological approach we use for explanations of cosmic questions—Buddhism, Christianity, humanism, paganism, and more—this theology should also affirm our social outreach. We should also remember our history: women and men of liberal faith and their deeds that came before us can inspire our modern social action.

Why should we work for justice in the world, many of you ask? Isn't there enough to do just keeping ourselves, or our families, or our congregations, together? For one, we work in the world because we believe that change is possible, that the world can be made into a better place and that each of us can contribute to that change. We also do this work to keep evils and injustices of the world from changing us.

What can you do to represent liberal religion in the world? No contribution is too small and all actions contribute to bringing about change: in racial and sexual oppression, in peace efforts, in cleaning up planet earth, in poverty and human rights and prison reform and on, and on, and on. There is much to do in our quest for freedom, equity, and compassion. Let's listen to Rev. Gilbert's Prophetic Imperative.

See you in church!

Rev. Barbara

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