



Bridging



January 2007

The Newsletter of the First Parish Church, Bridgewater, MA

"Welcoming the New Year"

As I write this column in mid-December, I am still in a "giving" mode, thinking ahead to presents I plan to give family and friends in a few days. I've never been materialistic at Christmastime. I know my best gifts to people I care about are offerings of myself, and not just one day but all year through. Still, there is a certain amount of franticness as I figure out the presents I do plan to give, especially to children in my family.

As you read this column in early January, you may be thinking not only about what you gave but also what you received—and perhaps also returned and exchanged. Isn't it heart-warming, when a certain gift is just the right thing? Gifts like that remind us about the importance of giving, during the winter holidays and all through the year.

I hope both your recent giving and receiving have been satisfying. I also hope your gifts have represented more than material value: that they have represented your love and your connections with those who matter to you. I often wish that the giving spirit of this time of year would last all year through, not because of the load of presents we could end up with but because of the messages of caring that giving represents. What would it look like if, rather than only once a year, we had a monthly giving holiday, a date with ourselves to be intentional about giving to others? I'm not necessarily talking about material giving—I also mean gifts of time, or good wishes, or moral support. These gifts wouldn't cost much, but their rewards could be great—stronger and deeper connections, lasting friendships, firmer family ties. As we enter a new calendar year, giving to this congregation also matters. This is already a very giving congregation. Many of you give much in time, talents, energy, and ideas. You also give materially, through annual pledges and special offerings. This church needs both types of gifts. Sometimes your time or energy is just right. Sometimes your financial support is the best gift.

In the coming months, there will be opportunities for you to demonstrate both types of giving. You will be called to give materially: a special Fair Share offering in January, and the annual canvass in March, for starters. You will also have a chance to give new ideas and projects: stay tuned for more about the new Stewardship Committee, whose work will include but encompass much more than the annual pledge drive. I hope it will be possible for you to maintain your giving level of the past. Maybe you can even think about increasing your giving, in your pledge or in your help on a project. Let the winter holidays just past serve as a reminder that for every gift given, much is also received.
Happy Holidays, January 2007!

See you in church!

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