



ON THE STREET

The Peoples Church of Chicago

Newsletter for January, 2013

"A Spiritual Home for People of Conscience"

CALENDAR

Upcoming Sundays

- **Sundays 10am:** Worship Service, Rev. Jean Darling preaching.
- **Sun, Jan 20: M.L. King Sunday** with Rev. Dr. Sharon Ellis Davis. Followed by all church **potluck**, special showing of 1953 film, "**Bright Road**," with Harry Belafonte. Then, stay for a 2 Li'l Fishes **talent show!**

Other Events

- **Sat, Jan 5, 4pm:** Spiritual Beans, at Inspiration Kitchens. We've talked about politics & money – now sex!
- **Weds, Jan 9, 6pm:** Treasures of Uptown interfaith steering committee.
- **Fri, Jan 11, 6pm:** Second Friday: Folk singing duo **Cloverleaf**.
- **Thurs, Jan 17, 1:30pm:** 2 Li'l Fishes development committee.
- **Sat, Jan 19, 10am:** PBC Board meets, Molly's Café.
- **Sat, Jan 26, 7pm:** Joseph Bures plays Beethoven and Strauss, in "The Frivolous and the Serious."

Minister's Notes:

Freedom

Rev. Jean Siegfried Darling



With the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1st, we're thinking about freedom this month, and what it is, what it means – and how we do it.

The idea of freedom is at the very heart of the American spirit – the Revolutionary-era "Don't Tread on Me" flag epitomizes that spirit of rebellious individualism. That flag has recently been claimed as a symbol of the Tea Party, a group that seems to see individual freedom as its primary rallying cry.

A powerful libertarian streak runs through our history – and generally it's a good thing. I think it saves us from occasional impulses toward Big Brotherly oppression.

But this individualistic impulse always needs to be balanced with a sense of community, of the idea of the common good.

It seems as though what we struggle with is the desire not to be tyrannized, to be the autonomous selves we are born to be, but with a sense of connection and commitment to those with whom we share this planet. How to have both?

Sunday the 11th we'll celebrate the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. And on the 20th we'll celebrate the life of Martin Luther King, who spoke out powerfully for freedom – not just for African Americans, but for poor people, for low-wage workers, for the Vietnamese we were in the midst of fighting, at that time.

These are what we might call "outer" freedoms, what Erich Fromm describes as "freedom of action, political or social freedom."

These freedoms are essential. But we also need inner freedom, spiritual freedom. Fromm writes,

Inner freedom is freedom of the mind, freedom from the bondage of ignorance of human nature and its potentialities. Ignorance breeds fear, suspicion, hatred, and confusion. As a result the individual lives in the prison of his own limitations, restricted understanding, emotions and activities.¹

In the religious realm, freedom has more to do with Fromm's inner freedom – freedom not to be tyrannized by human exigencies, but to respond only to God's demands. And, of course, each faith has its

¹ Erich Fromm, *Man For Himself*, p. 256.

cont'd...

2 Li'l Fishes

2 Li'l Fishes serves a free hot lunch Tuesday, and Thursday through Sunday, downstairs in Anderson Hall. All are welcome.

To help out, contact Will Pruitt, volunteer coordinator, twolilfishes@yahoo.com.

Minister's Notes, cont'd

own way of defining how we understand what "God's demands" are.

In the UCC saying, "God is still speaking," and the UU belief in our evolving faith, God's demands change and grow with our own increasing understanding of the natural world and our own spiritual understanding.

All this sounds so abstract. But I'm reflecting on a recent Frontline program about Washington DC school administrator Michelle Rhee, who came in and turned the schools upside down – fired hundreds of teachers, and began paying teachers for higher test scores by their students. Over her three-year tenure, student test scores rose dramatically.

But the program outlined how test scores appeared to have been fudged – one new principal even caught some of her teachers in a room with piles of preliminary tests and erasers in their hands. The teachers joked about erasing doodles in the margins. But after she locked up the answer sheets, the scores for her school dropped 40%.

Improving kids' performance is not easy, not something you can change by fiat – it takes encouragement, honoring individual gifts, and discovering what are the actual real-life obstacles to their success.

I see our human institutions as organic things, and ourselves as intelligent participants in them – it's hard to watch when someone comes into an institution and bulldozes forward as if people were machine parts.

Chaos is not easy to live with – but a certain amount of it is necessary for creative work. And not only is God "still speaking," but God is present in any creative activity we do, especially things we do together, in our schools, our churches, our government. What it means is that we need to be humble enough to leave room for the other voices, for perspectives we may not share. If God is still speaking, we need to be listening.

peace, Jean

Unity Party

Saturday, January 19, 2013

5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

**at First Unitarian Church of Chicago
5650 S. Woodlawn Ave., Chicago 60637**

To build/enhance Unity: Multiracial, multicultural, multigenerational and among U.U.s in the Chicago area. Free-will donations gladly accepted.

**Socializing, Dinner (bring a side dish to share),
Dancing, Poetry slam, DJ.**

For more information, please contact Finley Campbell at finleycampbell5222@comcast.net or 773-752-4019.



"Spiritual Beans"

Treasures of Uptown interfaith discussion group meets on Saturday, January 5, 4-5pm at Inspiration Kitchens, 4715 N. Sheridan, for another lively conversation. In February, we'll

take up the fourth taboo topic, "Religion." See www.TreasuresofUptown.org.

Martin Luther King Sunday

Following the service on January 20, Insight Arts is showing "BRIGHT ROAD," a moving film about a new school teacher (played by Dorothy Dandridge) who struggles with reaching an underachieving young man in a small rural community in the South. A pioneering 1953 film with a mostly black cast, in the era before school integration. It's also the first feature film appearance by Harry Belafonte, who co-stars as the principal of the school.



Following the film, stay for a **talent show** of 2 Li'l Fishes guests and friends.



Prayer Breakfast fundraiser

Saturday, February 23, 10am, in Molly's Café, join us to feed your body and your soul, as Ludie serves a delicious, filling breakfast with sausage, ham, pancakes, eggs, you name it!

And spiritual food consisting of music by the Voices of Praise choir and a reflection by Pastor Jean. Tickets, \$15 – help support Pastor Jean's salary!

Classical Piano Recital,
Saturday, Jan 26, 7pm: Joseph Bures plays Beethoven and Strauss – "The Frivolous and the Serious."



The Peoples Church of Chicago

941 W. Lawrence Avenue

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DONT TREAD ON ME



Calendar – January 2013

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 HAPPY NEW YEAR!	2	3	4	5 4 Spiritual Beans @Inspir Kitchens
6 10am Service	7	8	9 6:30 Treasures steering comm., foyer	10	11 6pm Taizé Coffeehouse w Cloverleaf, in Molly's Café	12
13 10am Service Trustees meet	14	15	16	17 1:30 2 Li'l Fishes	18	19 10 JustEmbrace Sole Care foot clinic 10-noon PBC board meeting Noon – joint PC/ PBC meeting
20 M.L. KING SUNDAY 10am Service Sharon Ellis Davis 11:30 Potluck Noon: special showing of 1953 black film BRIGHT ROAD	21	22	23	24 6pm O.N.E. Action Council, 1545 W. Morse	25	26 6pm Jos Bures piano recital: "The Frivolous and the Serious"
27 10am Service	28	29	30	31		

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