

community

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

March 2007

news

Rememberance and Renewal in our Community

by Jason Lydon, Congregational Director

Dear friends and members, this winter has been a time of numerous losses for our community. A former leader in the church (Arlene Watts), a friend in the struggle (Eric Weinberger), and our revered oldest member (Cynthia Foster), all left this world. Their contributions to our community and the larger movement for justice in this world are innumerable. The sadness we feel in their absence is great but the joy we must feel and the inspiration we must gain from the lives they lived is even greater. I have had the opportunity to watch the people in Community Church support each other through this difficult time. The stories shared, the hugs given, and the tears shed show how strong we can be when we choose to take care of each other and honor the lives of those so important to us. It is with the memory of all those who have come before us and struggled with us that we continue our fight for justice.

The search for justice continues as we prepare for our 30th annual Sacco and Vanzetti Award. This year we are presenting the award to Mumia Abu Jamal. Mumia, one of many political prisoners within the prison system of the United States, has spent the last 25 years locked up 23 hours a day without contact visits to his family or friends. Mumia was wrongfully convicted of shooting a police officer in 1982. He was targeted because of his involvement with the Black Panther Party and his work supporting the empowerment of Black people in the city of Philadelphia and around the country. Mumia has given so much to our movement. He is the author and/or editor of numerous books, including *Live from Death Row*, *We Want Freedom*, *All Things Censored*, *Death Blossoms*, and *175 Progress Drive*. Mumia has been vocal

about supporting liberation struggles around the world and ending U.S. imperialist policies, which so often lead to war and occupation.

Support for Mumia comes from around the world. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, The European Parliament, Alice Walker, Paul Newman, Maya Angelou, Sister Helen Prejean, Danny Glover, the Detroit and San Francisco City Councils, Amnesty International just to name a few. While some simply support a new trial for Mumia many others are calling for his immediate release. Twenty-five years of unjust imprisonment cannot be made right with a new trial. We need complete amnesty for Mumia and all political prisoners. I was recently at a Jericho-Boston meeting (an organization working to support political prisoners) and learned about our failure as a movement to provide for our family locked up in cages. We contribute to the work for justice in many different ways and there are well over 100 people locked up in our prison system because of actions they took in support of the same work we are struggling to do today. It is our responsibility to take care of them and be there for them.

While I believe that nearly all people in prison are political prisoners we must never forget those inside who are there because they took actions to forward our movement. You may not support the tactics they used but please remember how easy it is for the privileged to critique the methods of the oppressed. In the spirit of those we have already lost this year let us continue the struggle and be unwavering in our call for freedom and justice for all.

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF BOSTON



Sunday Service & Speakers Forum

in Lothrop Auditorium
Sundays at 11:00am

March 4

**SETH KIRSHBAUM &
CHRISTOPHER MESSINGER**

*"The Suburbs as a Place for Justice:
Youth Activism in the 'Burbs"*

March 11

Observing International Women's Day

NAVARASA DANCE THEATER

"A Story and a Song"

February 18

Central America Week

JAMES HARNEY

"Globalization and the Undocumented"

March 25

**30th Annual Sacco and Vanzetti Award
to Mumia Abu Jamal**

(received by Pam Africa)

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

CCB Program Committee Meeting

is Sunday, March 18, 1:30pm



Welcome Rev. Franklin Hobbs and Healing Our Land!

As of March 1st Healing Our Land will be opening its office doors on our fourth floor. Minister Franklin Hobbs and Healing Our Land have created a ministry with and to marginalized communities living with HIV/AIDS in the Boston area. Their work is primarily to serve People of Color, sex workers, people in prison, BGLT people, and other oppressed communities struggling to address the many issues related to HIV/AIDS from housing to healthcare and from faith to family. Please be sure you get to know them and the work that they do. We will be building this relationship over the months to come and learning about the best ways we can take action and be in solidarity with this essential work.

Spread the Word About our Social Justice Sunday School!

The Justice School has gotten interest from a few parents who have been looking for a Sunday School program just like ours! We have changed the start date to September but if we are able to have 12 or more students sign up we can start sooner. The sooner the better!

I invite you to spread the word about the Justice School with your friends and neighbors. The more people who know about our Sunday School program the more our church will grow. I think often of what a powerful experience it would be to grow up in our caring, supportive and fun church. Can you imagine the impact our congregation could have on young people from the age of 7 and up?

I know for myself, that my faith based community "raised me" in ways that my school couldn't. I found people who I could look up to, elders and peers who gave me guidance and supported me in my effort to find truth and meaning in my life and in my actions. I think all of us want to help young people develop their social justice skills and their identity as young activists.

Sometimes people find it a little uncomfortable to invite their friends and family to join in worship, but I feel that finding the courage to spread the word about our church is a powerful action. Many parents are looking for a church that is progressive, radical and rooted in peace and justice. Why not spend today thinking about people you interact with everyday who have started families that might enjoy attending our service and signing their children up for the Justice School.

If you are interested in letting others know about the Justice School, contact me at: jooyoung@commchurch.org or call me at 617 266-6710.

-Joo Young Choi, *Director of Children/Youth SJE Program*

Cynthia Foster, at 99; A Rebel Against War and Racism for Almost a Century

Cynthia B. (Wilder) Foster climbed her last mountain -- 1,832-foot Mount Watatic in Ashby -- at age 91. She didn't stop driving until she was 96, and she never stopped fighting for social justice, attending rallies well into her 90s. "Cynthia was fiercely independent, one of those old New England women who did for themselves," said Andrea Bird of Waltham, wife of Mrs. Foster's stepgrandson.

When Mrs. Foster died February 1st at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center following a massive stroke, she was still engaged in her longtime battle with the Internal Revenue Service over the use of her federal taxes for military spending, Bird said. She was 99 and had been living at Mount Pleasant Home in Jamaica Plain.

A member of the New England War Tax Resistance for many years, she wore its red and white button "every day of her life," Bird said. The button says "Don't Pay War Taxes" and bears the likeness of Henry David Thoreau, who spent a night in jail for protesting the use of taxes to finance the Mexican-American War. Mrs. Foster's battles with the IRS were legendary.

Bird said Mrs. Foster would often quote John Haynes Holmes, a Unitarian Universalist minister born in 1879: "War is the quintessence of evil. It is the greatest of all evils, because it contains all other evils within itself." War was not the only issue Mrs. Foster protested. Racial discrimination was high on her list. When she was studying art at Boston University in 1927, an African-American student from Washington, D.C. was banned from attending a dance at the request of several Southern students. Mrs. Foster had invited Francis Siphax to the dance the previous year, but because of the Southerners' protest, the student was not allowed to return, Bird said.

Mrs. Foster joined the Community Church of Boston, a Unitarian Universalist church, in 1924, four years after its founding. "Cynthia was a voice of reason in times of contention and a voice of contention when we were too comfortable," said the Rev. David Carl Olson, who was minister there from 1998 to 2005.

In the 1940s, the *Globe* said: "She picketed segregated dime stores, department stores, and lunch counters in Washington, demonstrated at bus stations and at a segregated YMCA until the management flooded the ventilating system with ammonia fumes to drive her out. In 1963, she was among the 250,000 who marched on Washington for equal rights. In 1971, she led 3,000 people to a demonstration on Boston City Hall Plaza to protest the Vietnam War."

The Community Church honored her in 1984 with the Sacco-Vanzetti Memorial Award for Social Justice, but she initially refused it, saying she didn't deserve to be in the ranks of previous winners such as attorney William Kunstler. After the pastor persuaded her to take it, telling her she was the board's unanimous choice, she received a standing ovation from 100 guests.

Mrs. Foster might have inherited her sense of social justice. She was born in Ashby, the youngest of Albert and Adeline Wilder's four daughters. Her mother had underwritten the cost of publishing a biography of Stephen Fritchman, a radical Unitarian minister, according to Olson. A sister, Dorothy of Ashby, was also a social activist until her death in 1992.

After she married Carl Anthonson in 1938, they moved into the house his family had bought in 1922 on Spring Park Avenue in Jamaica Plain. Her husband also supported liberal causes. He joined protests against the controversial executions of anarchists Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco and "attended rallies for the condemned radicals on Boston Common, kept an extensive diary of the trial, and even viewed their bodies after they had been executed in 1927," according to the Associated Press. In 1949, the couple moved to Washington, D.C., where they lived for about 15 years. Anthonson died in 1966.

In 1976, she married Emery Foster, a former lay leader of All Souls Church in Washington, and the couple moved to Jamaica Plain. Foster died in 1979.

Mrs. Foster was a woman of modest means, Bird said, but she contributed what money she could to organizations promoting social causes. Last fall, she traveled to Ashby for the dedication of a new wing of the library to which she had contributed. She gave her Jamaica Plain home to the American Friends Service Committee, and she donated her body to BU Medical School.

A memorial service will be held at April 15, 2pm, at Community Church of Boston.

- Gloria Negri, *Globe* Staff (*Boston Globe*, Feb. 11, 2007)

Obituary: Arlene Watts

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Arlene Watts in late January. Arlene was the treasurer for several years at CCB, contributing her financial knowledge to many projects at the Church. Our deepest condolences to all who knew and cared for her.

30th Annual Sacco & Vanzetti Award: **MUMIA ABU JAMAL**

Sunday, March 25th, 12pm
at the
**Community Church
of Boston**

*Please join us for a day of
honoring Mumia Abu Jamal
while remembering the
legacy of Sacco & Vanzetti.*



with **Pam Africa**, accepting the award on behalf of
Mumia, **Lynne Stewart**, Human Rights Attorney and
recipient of the 2005 Sacco & Vanzetti Award, and music
from **The Foundation Movement**

*sponsored by the Community Church of Boston, Boston
Jericho, and South End Press*

Our Purpose

Community Church of Boston is a free community of women and men 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.

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