



# glad tidings

a newsletter of  
the first spiritualist  
church of salem

muriel karolides, pastor emeritus

## brother nick and ol' saint nick

*by gary hansen*

**B**rother Nicodemus, or Brother Nick as most people called him, was a wonderful friend of the First Spiritualist Church of Salem.

I don't think I have ever met anyone who searched for the truth more than Brother Nick. He was deeply interested in the meaning of all the things he encountered in his life. He shared with all of us in the Tuesday night class the original meaning of many religious ceremonies and symbols. His search brought him to the study of comparative religions. He was very active in ecumenical groups across the Northshore.

Though he was a Catholic brother versed in the dogma and theology of the Catholic Church, he nonetheless sought the truth wherever it could be found. More profoundly, he sought the truth no matter how that might impact his own belief system. Brother Nick understood that people are passionate about their beliefs, and it can be very hard for them to accept truths that challenge or counter those beliefs. To have one's beliefs so challenged can feel very threatening...and Brother Nick understood this while also committing himself to discovering the truth for himself, and to bring that truth to others.

In this issue of *Glad Tidings*, a copy of a lecture Brother Nick delivered at the First Spiritualist Church of Salem is reprinted in nearly its entirety. Imagine the historical truths Brother Nick faced in researching the origins of Christmas that challenged his theology. Here, *Pagan Rites of Christmas*, is presented to the readership of Glad Tidings in Brother Nick's own words (see page 5).

*For those who knew Brother Nick while he was on the earth plane, they recount warm and tender memories of him. For those who did not have the privilege of knowing him, there is delight in getting to know him through the message work in the circles. Gary Hansen, author of this series of articles, was a close associate of Brother Nick. He has generously and happily agreed to contribute these articles to Glad Tidings.*

### Editor's Note:

Visit our website at [www.firstspiritualistsalem.org](http://www.firstspiritualistsalem.org) and share your thoughts about what you'd like to see on the website and read in the newsletter. Email at [info@firstspiritualistsalem.org](mailto:info@firstspiritualistsalem.org).

volume 5 issue 2      winter 2008/2009  
designer/editor: pczewski

### inside this issue

<b>the changing tides ...</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>president's report ....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>healing .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>pagan rites .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>tradition vs.</b>	
<b>progression.. .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>pizza night .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>committee comments..</b>	
<b>.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>human energy .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>schedule .....</b>	<b>13</b>

### *glad tidings*

is a publication of the  
first spiritualist church of salem  
34 warren st., salem, ma 01970  
978-745-2098  
an affiliate of the national spiritualist  
association of churches since 1894

### **pastoral committee**

**mary ciaramitaro**  
**patricia cizewski**  
**priscilla herrick, cm**  
**nancy karolides, cm**  
**david leclair, ch**

ch—commissioned healer  
cm—certified medium



## the changing tides of *glad tidings* by pat cizewski, editor

**W**ith an eye toward continuous improvement and, in the Spiritualist term, reformation, *Glad Tidings* is being remade: in some ways contracting, in some ways expanding.

Rather than monthly editions, *Glad Tidings* is now on a quarterly schedule. For events that are scheduled and occur in the interim between editions, flyers will be available and the church website is updated frequently to keep you abreast of church happenings. Visit [www.firstspiritualistsalem.org](http://www.firstspiritualistsalem.org).

However, because there are only four editions of the newsletter, it will be a more substantial publication. The goal is to publish more articles by more members and friends of the church. This new format can accommodate lengthier articles allowing for a more complete exploration of a theme or thought "trail." Thus, the call resounds to the members and friends of the church to put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboards) capturing the inspiration that spirit sends forth to each of us. You needn't be a Mark Twain nor a Maya Angelou nor a Picasso or Georgia O'Keefe to submit a work of inspiration; your submission of artwork, photography, poetry, prayer, or article need only be of the substance that resides in your heart and mind. Please see me, as the editor of this publication, for the ways I can work with you to publish a work of which you can be proud and from which others can learn or merely enjoy.

To submit an item for publication (and we have scanning capability for artwork), contact me at [info@firstspiritualistsalem.org](mailto:info@firstspiritualistsalem.org).

Also, look for committee updates in the newsletter, particularly the Long Range Planning Committee, Publicity Committee, and By Laws Committee.

Last, but not least, it is exciting to report that the Rev. John Sullivan of the First Spiritualist Church of Springfield has offered to help us build an archive of recorded sermons given at his church by First Spiritualist Church of Salem workers (many of which have played on his radio program and webcast, *Beyond Life*). This archive will be available on our website in the history section currently under construction. We are so grateful for Rev. Sullivan's generous and gracious offer of assistance in this endeavor and look forward to bringing you those archived lectures throughout 2009.

In the end, this publication, the website, and the church can only be what each of us is willing to contribute to it. As we approach a New Year, may we each look for the opportunity to contribute meaningfully and lovingly to the vigor of our church community.

*Your feedback is encouraged. Emails can be sent to [info@firstspiritualistsalem.org](mailto:info@firstspiritualistsalem.org) with the subject line, To the Editor. You can also submit newsletter materials through this same email address.*

## declaration of principles

1. We believe in Infinite Intelligence.
2. We believe that the phenomena of nature, both physical and spiritual, are the expression of Infinite Intelligence.
3. We affirm that a correct understanding of such expression, and living in accordance therewith, constitute true religion.
4. We affirm that the existence and personal identity of the individual continue after the change called death.
5. We affirm that communication with the so-called dead is a fact, scientifically proven by the phenomena of Spiritualism.
6. We believe that the highest morality is contained in the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."
7. We affirm the moral responsibility of individuals, and that we make our own happiness or unhappiness as we obey or disobey Nature's physical and spiritual laws.
8. We affirm that the doorway to reformation is never closed against any soul here or hereafter.
9. We affirm that the precepts of prophecy and healing are Divine attributes proven through mediumship.

# president's report

*by rev. bradley gosselin*

Our semiannual Members' Meeting was held on November 16, 2008. Elections were held, and due to the resignation of our Secretary, Laurie Drake, the officers positions were changed. Our thanks to Laurie for her hard work over the past year as Secretary. Laurie will continue as our webmaster and we are thankful and appreciative for the job she has done on setting up the new web site and it keeping it updated.

The new configuration of the Board of Trustees is as follows:

Reverend Bradley Gosselin, NST president  
Patricia Cizewski, vice president  
Mary Ciaramitaro, secretary  
Joyce DeFazio, treasurer  
Naomi Ellis, trustee  
Gerry Ganey, trustee  
Gary Hansen, trustee  
Sue Hinckley, trustee  
David LeClair, trustee

A special welcome to the newest board member, Gerry Ganey. Congratulations!

One bylaw change was voted on and another bylaw proposal received a first reading and will be voted on at our March Members' Meeting.

All business was successfully addressed and discussions were held on the following subjects:

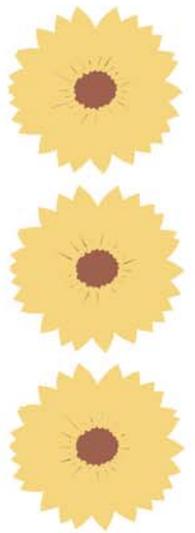
- Increasing church membership
- Increasing participation at meetings
- New fund raising ideas to offset costs of several expensive projects to repair our building
- How to better publicize our activities and fund raisers
- Increasing participation in the Guild and Guild activities

Please make note that there is an open invitation to all to attend the Long Range Planning Committee meetings. Your ideas and help are appreciated.

To all who attended our last Members' Meeting, thank you. To those who could not attend, you were missed, and our hope is that we will see you at the next one—your support and input is valued and needed.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Bradley Gosselin, Board President



**2009**

## meeting schedule

**long range  
planning**  
members only  
next meeting  
january 10 3:30 pm

## guild notes

next meeting: january 18, 4 pm  
guild meetings are open to  
everyone, not just members.  
submit activity ideas to  
[info@firstspiritualistsalem.org](mailto:info@firstspiritualistsalem.org)

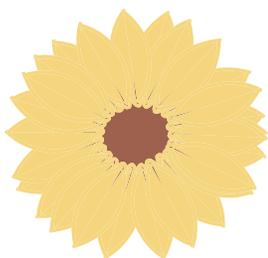
## board of trustees

### officers

rev. bradley gosselin, president  
patricia cizewski, vice president  
mary ciaramitaro, secretary  
joyce, de fazio, treasurer

### trustees

naomi ellis  
gerry ganey  
gary hansen  
sue hinckley  
david leclair



## Healing

If you know of someone who is in need of healing, please submit the name through our website at [info@firstspiritualistsalem.org](mailto:info@firstspiritualistsalem.org). Place "healing" in the subject line. Names that are submitted are forwarded to the healers of our church to be remembered in their healing meditations as well as being placed in our newsletter. Please take the time to send your healing thoughts and energy to those on our healing list:

### for our loved ones

Amy Rose	Anthony	Brookie	Corrinne
Helen	Jason	Jeff	Jen
Karen	Kayla	Kim	Kristen
Kristen S.	Madesyn	Millie	Norman
Phoebe	Rick W	Sharon	Stas

*We also place the names of our companion animals on our healing list. If you have an animal in need of healing, please do not hesitate to place it on our healing list.*

Abbey (cat)  
Timmy (cat)

A smooth transition to Priscilla Herrick's kitty, Tiggy, who made her transition to the rainbow bridge.

## Upcoming Human Energy Systems Workshop:

January 31 – 1:30 pm to 4 pm; see Page 9 for more details.

Workshop fee: \$35 general public, \$30 members

Facilitator: Sheila Thomson, Registered Polarity Practitioner



### the olmstead healing center

David LeClair, certified spiritualist healer  
private healing by appointment only

28 riverside street

danvers

978-774-2559

## prayer for spiritual healing

I ask the Great Unseen Healing Force to remove all obstructions from my mind and body and to Restore me to Perfect Health. I ask this in all Sincerity and Honesty, and I will do my part.

I ask this Great Unseen Healing Force to help both present and absent ones who are in need of help, and to restore them to perfect health. I put my Trust in the Love and Power of God.

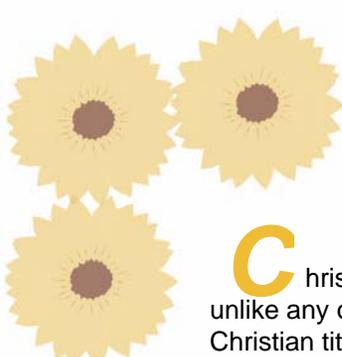
## healing services

Healing is available every Sunday evening beginning at 6:30 pm. The healing service begins with prayer and song followed by a meditation, at which time our healers are available to give healing through the laying-on-of-hands.

The congregation participates by contributing their own healing thoughts and prayers during the meditation and in sending absent healing to those whose names have been placed in the healing book.

## the pagan rites of christmas

by brother nick



**C**hristmas time is a celebration unlike any other. Although it has a Christian title, it is far more than a festivity restricted to just one religious sect. Christmas is truly a folk festival of Midwinter, combining elements from several ancient religions.

The overall theme of Christmas is the rebirth of the light on the darkest day of midwinter. From ancient times the shortest day has always been a time of danger. It is the “weird space” between two worlds<sup>1</sup>. It is a turning point when, should something go wrong, the days might continue to shorten until continuous night reigns. For millions of years, humans have conducted rites and ceremonies intended to ward off this awful possibility. In the British Isles, mid-winter sunrise is marked by many different megalithic monuments dating back over 5,000 years. We are all familiar with Stonehenge, but there are many more such monuments which all are oriented to mark the winter solstice. Solstice means sun stand still.

In the ancient world, the Mediterranean world (before the time of Constantine, the Roman emperor whose mother Theodosia became a Christian and then convinced him to convert), this was the time of the Roman Saturnalia, including the festival of Sol Invictus, the undefeated sun. In the Northern tradition, it is Yuletide, the “yoke” of the year, when the days begin to lengthen again. In ancient Germany, the Saxons honored the sun goddess Sunne at this time. It is also the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, the feast of lights, which runs for eight days in late December. All of these festivals last for several days around the actual shortest day. The full Christian period last 12 days, keeping things going until it is certain that the days are getting longer and normal life can resume. In all traditions, this is a time of present-giving, feasting, celebration and excess.

Throughout the West, the 25<sup>th</sup> of December has been celebrated as the birthday of the divinities of light. The 21<sup>st</sup> is the shortest day, and then the sun stands still (Sol-

stice) for four days before it begins to rise again, so the 25<sup>th</sup> is the “birthday” of light. The Babylonian Queen of Heaven, the Egyptian Osiris, the Greeks Dionysus and Adonis, Jesus, and the Nordic Balder are all said to have been born on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December. Important to the celebration of Christmas as we know it, is the birth of the Persian solar god Mithras. The Christian myth of the birth of Jesus is almost identical to the older Mithraic one. According to legend, this took place on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, in a cave, attended by shepherds and their sheep, cows, and other animals. In the beginning, Christians celebrated the birth of Jesus on or around the 28<sup>th</sup> of March, and it was not until the fourth century that it was brought into line with the Sol Invictus celebrated by everyone else. Constantine had tried to stamp out the country folk religion, but he found that he could not, so he declared by edict that Jesus was born on the 25<sup>th</sup> and so when they celebrated Sol Invictus, Jesus became the new “Sol” or Sun. Catholic liturgies, up until Vatican II in 1960, even refer in litanies to Jesus as the Sun.

Later, in Europe north of the Alps, the Christian and Pagan elements of Yuletide were woven together to create the festival we now know and love. Pagan traditions of Yule were not suppressed; they took their place alongside Christian practices in a peaceful coexistence. King Haakon the Good, a medieval king of Norway, for example, decreed that Yule and Christmas should always be celebrated at the same time, and everyone should keep Yule in his own way. An early example of the separation of church and state, and it remains the same today in our pluralistic society.

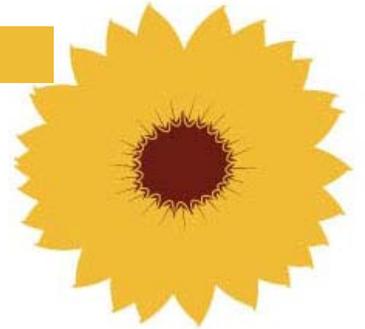
The chief deity of Yule is Father Christmas, the personification of midwinter jollity and excess. His other name, Santa Claus, is a corruption of Saint Nicolas (Santo Nicklaus) whose feast day is December 6, right at the beginning of the Yule period. Like many “saints,” however, he is just a Christianized version of the Pagan deity, Father Christmas. He is really “Old Nick.” Today, we associate this term with the devil, but originally Old Nick was a trickster, one who contributed to merriment. And Old Nick is the same as Odin, the shamanistic chief god of the Nordic pantheon and master of the “weird space” between the worlds.

—continued on page 12

<sup>1</sup> Weird space refers to that time between Halloween and December 28; it also refers to the space between the seen and unseen worlds.

## tradition vs. progression

by patricia cizewski, pastoral committee



**D**uring this time of year, Americans celebrate holidays steeped in tradition, be it ancient (such as Halloween), patriotic (Veteran's Day and Washington's Birthday, commonly referred to as President's Day), national (Thanksgiving, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day), religious (Eid al-Hadha in 2008, Hannukah, Christmas, Bodhi Day, Pancha Ganapati Festival), or cultural (New Year's and Valentine's). Tradition in this context is viewed as a positive, uniting force. Entire communities and families create their own unique traditions around the various holidays and celebrations, and in so doing, bring comfort and a sense of constancy to the participants. Together with ritual, tradition provides a stabilizing, bonding force that can bring cohesion among seemingly otherwise disparate peoples. Within this framework, tradition can be viewed as perhaps a necessary and positive expression of humankind.

Yet, tradition is a double-edged sword. It is tradition that has been used to justify some of the most brutal and regressive acts and oppressive sociopolitical realities throughout history, as well as in our present day world. At one time, it was the argument of tradition that barred women from voting. It was a degenerative sense of tradition that fueled the pogroms against Jews in Eastern European countries. It is tradition that is often cited as justification for all sorts of social ills, repressive policies, and acts of inhumanity or even brutality.

Thus, tradition can be used to either uplift and comfort or repress and abuse. Tradition, when employed as a security blanket to buttress ourselves against change or challenge, serves no one rightly but merely becomes the agent of resistance that offers up a false sense of security. Tradition can, quite effectively, be the rallying cry to block progress. Yet, those who have stood up to the traditionalists have, within the long view of history, been honored as progressives credited

with moving society forward in profound and meaningful ways.

In modern history, progressives have abolished slavery (Abraham Lincoln, Sojourner Truth, Isaac and Amy Post), pushed for civil and voting rights for the oppressed (Elizabeth Blackwell, Susan B. Anthony, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X), won just revolutions (Ghandi, Nelson Mandella), and sacrificed themselves to a world addicted to violence (Benazir Bhutto, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.).

When looking at the history of most of the world's major religions, Spiritualism is devoid of both the positive and the negative sides of tradition. Whereas other religions have the benefit and the burden of centuries, and in many cases millennia, over which to have established their tradition (and the consequence of that tradition), Spiritualism has merely a century and a half from which to draw its religious culture. Given that Spiritualism promotes truth and enlightenment as an individual journey to be shared among the like-minded, it further negates the propensity toward establishing a shared and identifiable tradition one could call strictly Spiritualist in origin and nature.

Spiritualism stands on a precipice at this time. From a worldwide membership counted in the millions shortly after the dawn of Spiritualism (heralded as the New Dispensation), Spiritualism today struggles to maintain and sustain its churches. Why?

The answer is complex, but part of that answer lies in the push me-pull you effect between what some erroneously call "traditional Spiritualism" and what others call, equally erroneously, "progressive." Another way to capture this dynamic is "Spiritualism vs. New Age." In holding fast to "traditional" Spiritualism, we lock out the very heart of Spiritualist philosophy—to seek out new truths wherever they may be found. To clasp tight the Declaration of Principles as though they are dogma while at the same time proclaiming that Spiritualism is freed from dogma and creed is a false trip. To fear the exploration of new thought because it may seem to violate or challenge the principles is a violation of the very definition of being Spiritualist.

—continued on page 10

# PIZZA NIGHT

WITH SAL'S HOMEMADE PIZZA

&

# ALL MESSAGE SERVICE

WITH YOUR SPIRIT LOVED ONES



# FEBRUARY 28

# 5 PM



# \$25

GENERAL PUBLIC

# \$20

MEMBERS

## **Nourish your body/Nourish your soul**

Pizza Night and All Message Service featuring Sal's homemade pizza!  
Everyone in attendance receives a message.

**First Spiritualist Church of Salem**

**34 Warren St.** 

**Salem, MA**

RSVP preferred so we can tell Sal how many pizzas to make.  
Call 978-745-2098 or email: [info@firstspiritualistsalem.org](mailto:info@firstspiritualistsalem.org)

We're located at the corner off South Pine and Warren St. at the junction of Highland Ave and Essex

## committee comments

### long range planning committee

The long range planning committee of the First Spiritualist Church of Salem, NSAC was appointed by the Board of Trustees with the mandate to produce a long range plan for the church. The intent, as originally described by the board, was to set forth a list of priorities pertaining to the upkeep and maintenance of the church.

The scope of such a charge is vast. It requires a full assessment of the physical plant including the exterior and interior structures (walls, roof, ceilings, foundation, windows, masonry, and so forth); landscaping and upkeep of the grounds (snow removal, planting, plant maintenance, raking, trimming); and facility systems (heating, electrical, plumbing). To implement such a plan is going to be costly.

*With a membership hovering somewhere in the vicinity of 50 people, with only approximately half of those as fully participating members, there does not exist a sufficient base of support to implement any reasonable long range plan unless that plan includes, as a fundamental premise, membership-building.*

To present a full and meaningful long range plan, the long range planning committee must address the present state, not only of the physical plant, but a full inventory and audit of all processes and conditions which impact the operation of the church: physical, financial, and operational. Membership-building must necessarily be a consideration in, especially, the financial and operational assessments. Without sufficient numbers of contributing members of the church, the resources will simply not be available to support even the most basic upkeep and maintenance of the facility.

**Thus, the Long Range Planning Committee has adopted the following as its mission statement:**

*We are committed to making manifest the vision of a prosperous First Spiritualist Church of Salem by creating a long range plan that assesses the full scope of the present condition of the church and its needs: physical, fiscal, and operational (including congregation- and membership-building).*

### The role of the Long Range Planning Committee:

Though it is neither the responsibility nor the mission of this committee to physically attend to the tasks of implementing the long range plan; it is both the responsibility and mission of this committee to define and refine a plan that addresses not only the work that must be done, but also the ways in which the goals, priorities, and identified needs of the church might be met.

It is up to the various established committees and boards within the church, such as the Board of Trustees, the Pastoral Committee, and the Guild to decide those issues and directions for which they have responsibility.

Thus, the LRP committee identifies and proposes, whereas the institutional bodies debate, determine appropriate direction, and enact to carry forward those actions that will meet and/or exceed the goals identified in the Long Range Plan. This delineation of roles in no way supersedes the roles and responsibilities as defined by the by laws of this church or the NSAC, but serves instead as a guiding principle to move the planning function forward within the organization.

### Working in a Fishbowl: [working in full view of the membership]

Members of the First Spiritualist Church of Salem are invited to attend LRP meetings. To keep meetings focused and productive, please follow the meeting ground rules.

- The chair runs the meetings.
- At meetings, the chair will provide an opportunity for attendee comment within a structure considerate of time and relevant to the agenda.
- If comment is sought by the committee, the individual(s) will be recognized through the chair only (in other words, attendees do not freely participate in the meeting discussions unless the chair has requested they do so).
- Use of the talking stick when needed. This is used for controversial, difficult debates. Whoever has the stick talks until she or he feels heard and understood by the group.

### Chairs

#### Long Range Planning:

Pat Cizewski  
Gary Hansen, co-chair

#### Publicity:

Pat Cizewski

#### By Laws

Priscilla Herrick

Visit [www.firstspiritualist-salem.org](http://www.firstspiritualist-salem.org) for meeting information and reports. Go to the **Who's Who** tab and click the links located in the Board of Trustees section.

Ideas and comments are welcome and can be submitted by email: [info@firstspiritualist-salem.org](mailto:info@firstspiritualist-salem.org)

# the human energy system

## the root of all healing

Inner Feng Shui. That's how Sheila Thomson, a registered polarity practitioner, describes the general premise of energy healing.

"Our energy system begins at the center of the spine and it moves through us emanating as the aura," says Thomson. "You have an invisible body, and the more your invisible body is balanced, the more balanced is your physical (visible) body, and the more readily you can access balancing your spiritual self."

Thomson notes that when we have energy blocks, it causes discomfort, disease and dysfunction at some level.

"We have the capability to take pictures of the human aura through Kirlian photography, and you can see that when someone is off balance, the image is vaguely shifted to one side or another," adding, "it gives a new meaning to the phrase, 'I feel beside myself.' It can be quite literal."

Polarity therapy is intended not only as a healing modality, but can also help us better understand what it means to be centered. Thomson asserts that whether you are giving or receiving healing, understanding the human energy system is a life tool that is a valuable help in that work. She should know, she has been a practitioner in the healing arts for 30 years, starting as a clinical chiropractic assistant. From there, she learned about homeopathy and flower essences leading her into vibrationally-based medicine which eventually lead to TBM (total body modification) and polarity therapy. A graduate of the Polarity Realization Institute in Ipswich, MA, Thomson is a registered polarity practitioner.

"We need to learn to groom our energy fields," she says. "It is just like brushing your teeth or brushing your hair...we need to learn how to groom our invisible anatomy."

Thomson emphasizes that you don't need to be a Spiritualist, a practicing healer, or medical professional for this workshop; it is designed for everyone, even teenagers can benefit from it. Her view is that people today are taking a more active role in creating their own health and wellness plans; a trend she sees as positive. They can include energy healing modalities, too, in terms of balancing the overall physical body through understanding their subtle energy systems. She maintains that our energy systems underlie everything we do from running a marathon to taking a test in school.

"If your invisible energy systems are clear and aligned, you can access your life force to give you more juice for all functions," Thomson notes, "Lack of awareness and understanding can cause imbalances...once we understand how we get into balance, we can better understand what throws us off. The human energy system is like our inner Geiger counter."



*sheila thomson,  
registered polarity practitioner,  
brings an energizing workshop to  
the first spiritualist church of salem*

Sheila Thomson, RPP, TBMP

## The Human Energy System

January 31, 2009

1:30 pm to 4 pm

\$35 general public

\$30 members

First Spiritualist  
Church of Salem

refreshments included

Sheila Thomson is a registered  
polarity practitioner at Cutting  
Chiropractic and Healing in  
Amesbury, Massachusetts

Likewise, it is equally foolhardy to disregard the wisdom and complexity of the principles for the excitement of new (or New Age) ideas. To support change for the sake of change is as shortsighted and irresponsible as those who would hold doggedly and narrowly to the established principles (and regulations) of Spiritualism. To pursue a path merely because it has been slapped with the word “metaphysical” serves no good cause. To abandon discernment is to invite dissolution to the proven truths and wisdom in Spiritualist philosophy and practices. It is a tricky and dangerous tightrope we walk between tradition and progression.

The pioneers of Spiritualism were among the intellectual elite and progressives of their generation. Though not all suffragists were Spiritualist, it can be said with pride and accuracy that all Spiritualists were suffragists. 19<sup>th</sup> century Spiritualists were also among the abolitionists, health and dress reformists, and child labor reformers. Their ranks included people from all walks of life and all stations in life from judges, such as New York State Supreme Court Justice John Edmonds; to publishers, such as Horace Greely; to common everyday folk, such as Amy and Isaac Post. They were alternately referred to as the Free Thinkers and the Progressive Thinkers. Their sociopolitical positions were inspired and informed by the genuine guidance they received from spirit. They were unafraid of new thought and were willing to entertain, through diligent and responsible investigation, new beliefs and truths. What would these same pioneers have to say today about Spiritualists and Spiritualism?

Keeping in mind that they have continued to progress on the spirit side of life, no doubt the pioneers of Spiritualism would encourage a more open-minded approach to learning about spiritual matters than can be found in many of our Spiritualist churches and societies. No doubt they would encourage the pursuit of responsible investigation while being ever mindful of Andrew Jackson Davis’ admonition to “under all circumstances, keep an even mind.”

Because we have “always done it that way” does not mean it has always been the right or the best way. Even if *it*, whatever “*it*” may be, was right at the time of *its* inception, time marches on and people, culture, and social constructs change. As Spiritualists, we have a responsibility not only to our own individual progression, but to the religion and those who might follow in it, to remain open to the eager, yet responsible investigation of new thought.

Though we cannot point to the pioneers and claim a tradition based upon their intellectual and spiritual proclivities, we can learn from them and the value of being free and progressive thinkers.

As we see a New Year approach, may we use this time to revisit our individual and collective notions and inclinations about our religion, about the nature of truth, and about our obligation to move forward on the path toward enlightenment for ourselves and all of Spiritualism. May Infinite Spirit guide and bless us on this journey.

## Healing Saturdays

*If you have yet to experience a Healing Saturday through the First Spiritualist Church of Salem’s Healing Center, you have missed the exquisite experience of receiving love from spirit. Please give yourself the gift of healing this New Year and experience the joy of the healing touch.*

**noon to 3 pm**  
healing in the sanctuary  
refreshments in olmstead hall

**january 10**

**february 14**

**march 14**

stay 5 minutes or the entire 3 hours

**publicity committee ideas**

- Work in concentric circles outward from the church location.
- Take flyers to local libraries (Lisa Cheney provided tips on locations and high traffic areas for most visibility)
- Purchase targeted ad space in local papers
- Meet with editors of local newspapers
- Develop the website more
- Investigate the potential of a church blog
- Purchase a church computer
- Provide volunteers with a very few flyers with specific targets and dates for posting
- Hold group “stuffing” sessions for mailing the newsletter and/or flyers to individuals

*Stay tuned for a web announcement for the next scheduled meeting.*

*To contribute your ideas and/or energy contact committee chair, Pat Cizewski, at [info@firstspiritualistsalem.org](mailto:info@firstspiritualistsalem.org).*

**bylaws committee**

The membership has requested that the bylaws committee hold a special meeting for church members who want to learn more about the bylaws, what they mean, and the process used to change them.

More information about this initiative will be forthcoming from the committee chair, Priscilla Herrick, in plenty of time prior to the March members meeting.

Check in with our website at: [www.firstspiritualistsalem.org](http://www.firstspiritualistsalem.org) for details as they become available. Just go to the Who’s Who tab and click the By Laws Committee link in the Board of Trustees section of Who’s Who.

*To request more information about the committees or to find out how to contribute to them to help shape the future of the church, email [info@firstspiritualistsalem.org](mailto:info@firstspiritualistsalem.org) and the committee chairs will be happy to respond.*

**publicity committee**

The publicity committee has been charged by Board of Trustees to tackle the issue of increasing church visibility through the media.

This committee is open to members, friends and congregants of the First Spiritualist Church of Salem—anyone really with the ideas and the energy to contribute to this effort.

“The efforts of the church to date have predominantly focused on traditional informational venues, such as the newsletter and trying (with little success) to post items to the community and church calendars in the local Salem newspapers,” says committee chair, Pat Cizewski. “Within the last year or so, we’ve added a redesigned and more dynamic website to the mix, but we have a long way to go yet to make the First Spiritualist Church of Salem a known entity in the city of Salem.”

To provide a quick assessment of how far the church needs to travel to achieve this goal, consider that the First Spiritualist Church of Salem has been chartered since 1894, and has resided at its present location since the 1920’s.

“We’ve always trusted that Spirit will lead those who are supposed to be here to the church,” notes Cizewski. “However, we also need to realize that Spiritualism teaches us that we must do our part, too. What is that saying? ‘Spirit will not do for us what we need to do for ourselves.’ I think this is a perfect example of that.”

**been there/done that**

The established publicity avenues at the church include:

- Quarterly newsletter
- Flyers
- Website
- Announcements made during Sunday services
- Newspaper calendar submissions
- Word of mouth

It was noted at the first publicity committee meeting for this season that even the established mechanisms for publicity have not been used to their best effect. For example, printing flyers isn’t helpful if the flyers aren’t posted, or are posted in ineffectual places. In other words, you don’t want to post a flyer for a children’s event in a nursing home; the better choice would be the children’s section of a bookstore or library.

**Making Room for the New**

Clearing clutter isn’t just good for one’s home; it can be a useful principle applied to almost anything, including our thoughts and attitudes. Because something has not worked to its best effect in the past, doesn’t mean it cannot be retooled for success today. Clearing out soured attitudes about past publicity efforts is one way to make room for the new.

Odin had only one eye. In his youth, he went to the Three Fates (the weird sisters) who, although they could tell the future, were blind. In exchange for learning from them what the future would hold, Odin gave them one of his eyes so that they could see the realities of this world. They would pass the eye back and forth between them. But from that time, Odin had to wear a patch over his eye. Thus, when Wagner wrote his massive work, the Ring of the Nibelungs, when he had Wotan come on the stage wearing a patch over his eye, everyone immediately knew that it was Odin. It is not uncommon in productions of the Nutcracker ballet that the character, Drosselmeyer, wears a patch over one eye. His very name is also a give-away. It means "the bird who deceives or tricks you." So in the Nutcracker, we have a modern version of the Father Christmas legend. Even though the names change, the characters remain the same.

Now, why does Santa wear a red suit with fur cuffs? Father Christmas is still depicted in the shaman's costume (especially in Great Britain) wearing his freshly flayed animal skin with the fur inside and the bloody side outwards. When our society was still a hunting society, this was perfectly natural. Humankind always fashions its gods after what it knows. When culture became agricultural, then the gods were associated with the harvest. Note how many of Jesus' stories had to do with fishermen.

Also, as Santa's reindeer (Scandinavian) pull his sleigh through the sky, Odin is still leading the Wild Hunt, which was a troupe of specters travelling through the autumn skies taking away people unlucky enough to get in the way. Santa's sack of presents is also the shaman's medicine bag in which he carries the souls captured during the Wild Hunt. This is why we avoid "weird space" from Halloween until the end of December. That is why you are not supposed to be out after dark. Weird space is the opening between the two worlds. Notice how we are still affected by these beliefs and our modern mythology, as seen in the movies (such as Poltergeist I, II, and III) has the opening between the worlds in a closet (darkness), over a fire, and in mirrors, and the message is always "lead us to the light."

The last and most recent element to our celebration of Christmas is the tree. No home is complete without a Christmas tree decked with lights, baubles and with presents under it. This is a central European (German, Celtic) tradition that was brought to Britain only in the 1800s. The evergreen Christmas tree represents Yggdrasil, the eternal evergreen World tree of northern tradition. In a ritual intended to bring gifts of wisdom (symbolized by light) to humankind, Odin was crucified on Yggdrasil. This tree is a symbol of the cosmic axis joining the heavens and the earth on which shamans fly up and down while in trance.

They are our mediators between heaven and earth. Around the World tree circle the stars and planets, which we symbolize by the decorations we put on it. Notice, we put a star at the top for the heavens, and presents around the bottom because they are material things belonging to this world. So believe it or not, our Christmas tree represents the galaxy we live in.

Every year we read solemn statements, usually by priests or ministers, about the "true meaning of Christmas" being overwhelmed by commercialism and hedonism. What they are forgetting, or ignoring, is the historical reality that Christmas has always been like that, except for eight years when it was illegal in Britain between 1652 and 1660. Christmas was abolished by Cromwell's Puritans because they were against the Pagan parts because they were Pagan, against the Christian parts because they were Catholic, and against festivals in general because people enjoyed themselves. To celebrate any aspect of Christmas was a criminal offense for those eight years, until it was restored with the return of King Charles II to the throne in 1660. Barring those eight years, Christmas has proved remarkably resistant to change. From Osiris to Odin to Santa Claus and the Nutcracker, I just thought you'd like to see how we haven't come very far from our ancient ancestors.

### guild gab

#### officers

**gerry ganey, president**  
**patricia brooks, vice president**  
**helen riley, secretary**  
**jeff ganey, treasurer**

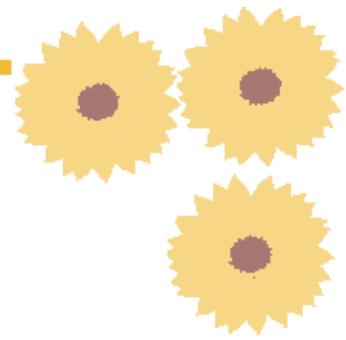
#### upcoming events

**January 31, human energy systems workshop (see p. 9)**  
**February 28, all message service and sal's pizza dinner (see p. 7)**  
**February: 50/50 raffle**

#### Meetings, begin 4 pm, olmstead hall

**January 10**  
**February 15**  
**March 15**

**Email: [info@firstspiritualistsalem.org](mailto:info@firstspiritualistsalem.org)  
for questions or to submit ideas**



## sunday services

all services are open to the public  
newcomers welcome

## student service 5:30 pm

students enrolled in development class demonstrate mediumship by inspirational speaking and spirit greetings.  
a light lunch is served following the early student service.

## regular service begins with healing at 6:30 pm

featured guest speaker and message medium schedule as follows:

### december 21

candle light service conducted by the pastoral committee  
**note: this service begins at 5:30 pm and refreshments follow, there is no early student service on this sunday**

### december 25

the church is holding an open house from 2pm to 4pm on Christmas day serving hot mulled cider, pastries, and fellowship—welcoming you, your family, and friends

### december 28

tba

### january 4

tba

### january 11

rev. elizabeth gosselin

### january 18

tba

### january 25

nancy karolides, cm

### february 1

tba

### february 8

mary ciaramitaro

### february 15

graham connelly

### february 22

frank and phyllis brown

### march 1

tba

### march 8

tba

### march 15

sirry balderstoddir

### march 22

class night

### march 29

victorian sunday

## e v e n t s

### saturdays, the drawing room

private readings with spirit-inspired drawings by the rev. elizabeth gosselin, nst.

by appointment only  
call 978-774-1571

### monday circles

held one monday per month, space is limited to 12 participants.

call 978-774-1571 for the schedule and to reserve your place.

circles are conducted by the rev. elizabeth gosselin and nancy karolides, cm.

for more information about the church or the religion of spiritualism contact:

[info@firstspiritualistsalem.org](mailto:info@firstspiritualistsalem.org)

all emails are read

