



The South Church
Weathervane

From the Minister's Desk

January 2011

Rev. Jennifer Brooks

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE HUMAN BEING

I can't count the number of times an older member of our congregation has recalled childhood schooldays and the task of memorizing poetry. Most can, with little prompting, recite at least a dozen lines of some early-memorized text. Inevitably, the question arises: "Do children memorize poetry anymore?" This isn't so much a concern or criticism of 21st-century education as it is a wish that today's children experience the same uncanny pleasure of being able to recall, with zest and energy, words of great poetic power.

Much of ancient poetry preserves history for later generations. Homer's *Odyssey*, for example, tells of a hero's long-delayed return from the Trojan war. But ancient narrative poems do more than preserve facts. Imagine: Reciting a story to a village of pre-literate audiences, the bard unites them in community. Word-pictures create images in the human mind as sounds and rhythms reverberate like music. Tale and poetry together hold spellbound the gathered inhabitants. Their common experience, with shared emotions and even a shared bio-physical response, binds the community as a living entity.

"Why was the ancient poet able to remember things or to never forget them? What is actually the true nature of human being?" —*Professor Nicoletta Isar, University of Copenhagen*

In the study of these ancient narrative poems, scholars like Prof. Nicoletta Isar of the University of Copenhagen have found repetitive patterns that act as memory aids, mnemonic devices, because they mesh particularly well with the structure of human cognition. One pattern is the X-shaped "chiasmus," or rhetorical figure of inverted parallelism, where one set of lines is followed by another set that grapples with similar ideas but in reverse order. (The example to the right is from the *Odyssey*.) Not only does this pattern help bard and audience remember the lines, it also creates a gripping, suspenseful emotional tone. Within the human brain, the poem's chiasmus gives structure to thought (aiding memory); the pattern itself likely arose from the structure of the human brain.

The lesson of the ancient narrative poem isn't so much that pre-literate societies relied more on memory. It's that human beings still think and feel in the same way. Humanity may have entered the second decade of the 21st century, but the true nature of the human being is still to seek connection and community. One way to express this true nature is to gather, like villagers of old, for common singing and storytelling. Every Sunday morning, Nantucket UUs gather as a community of all ages. *Like our ancestors, we share joys and sorrows; sing songs of hope; and tell stories of power and promise.*

- A. What killed you? (171)
- B. A long sickness? (172)
- C. Or Artemis with her arrows? (172-73)
- D. How is my father? (174)
- E. How is my son? (174)
- F. Are my possessions safe? (175-76)
- G. Has my wife been faithful? (177-79)
- G'. Your wife has been faithful. (181-83)
- F'. Your possessions are safe. (184)
- E'. Your son is thriving. (184-87)
- D'. Your father is alive but in poor condition. (187-96)
- C'. Artemis did not kill me with her arrows. (198-99)
- B'. Nor did a sickness kill me. (200-201)
- A'. But my longing for you killed me. (202-3)

Sunday Services & Sermon Topics

Selected sermons are available on our website, www.unitarianchurchnantucket.org, or get in touch with Rev. Jennifer Brooks, 508-228-7597 or nantucketminister@comcast.net. Copies of readings used in a Sunday service are available on request.

December 2010

Dec. 5, "My T-Shirt Says 'Life is Good'," Rev. Jennifer Brooks

Dec. 12, "By the Waters of Babylon," Rev. Jennifer Brooks

Dec. 19, "Holiday Music Sunday and Children's Pageant," UU Choirs, Sunday School, Rev. Jennifer Brooks

Dec. 26, Rev. Ted Anderson, Minister Emeritus (planned by the "4th Sunday" committee)

January 2011

Jan. 2, "Clean Slate," Rev. Jennifer Brooks

Jan. 9, "A Non-Defended Locality," Rev. Jennifer Brooks

Jan. 16, "The 'Paul Revere of Conscience'," Rev. Jennifer Brooks

Jan. 23, Speaker from Nantucket Palliative & Supportive Care (planned by the "4th Sunday" committee)

Jan. 30, "The Way of the Peacemaker," Rev. Nancy Nelson

Sunday Bulletin. To put an announcement in the Sunday bulletin, please call the Church Office by 12 noon Thursday, or email nantucketminister@verizon.net no later than 5:00 PM Thursday.

Newsletter. To put an item in the *Weathervane*, mailed out monthly, please email Les Ottinger lwojso@comcast.net. For more exact deadline information, call Les Ottinger (508-228-8710).

Website. To have an announcement posted on the website, simply provide it as an announcement for the Sunday Bulletin or the *Weathervane*, or send it directly to Georgen Charnes, curiositykeeper@gmail.com.

Caring Community. Our Minister and the volunteers who make up the "Care Network" stand ready to help with pastoral care or other support during an illness or family crisis. Call the Minister (508-228-7597). May each of us reach out in love to offer support when it is welcome. To volunteer, sign up on Sunday or call the office.

Office hours & space reservations. The Church Office is open mornings from 9:00 am to noon. To reserve space for an event, call the office (508-228-5466) and speak to Patti Demarest.

Guest Speaker Jan. 30: Rev. Nancy Nelson - Rev. Nancy Nelson, who retired in June 2010 after 16 years as Minister of Nantucket's United Methodist Church, has been studying the "Way of the Peacemaker" and will bring her learning on this topic to the UU pulpit on Jan. 30. Rev. Nelson has experience with interfaith traditions, having been first ordained as a Presbyterian minister. She worked for several years in San Francisco as a chaplain ministering to AIDS patients before moving to Nantucket and receiving ordination as a Methodist minister. She has long been interested in the work of inner peace and its connection to peacemaking in the world.

Martin Luther King Celebration 12 Noon Monday, Jan. 17, Summer St. Church The Interfaith Council's Martin Luther King Celebration this year features civil rights activist Edward B. Blackman. Marcia Hempel directs the Interfaith Choir; anyone who would like to sing should meet at the Summer St. Church at 11 am for rehearsal. Leah Hull will sing "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child." Planning committee: Terry Anne Vigil, Christian Science Church; Bill & Renée Oliver, Co-Directors, African Meeting House; and Rev. Jennifer Brooks.

Board of Trustees Report

“The book is closed, the year is done, the pages full of tasks begun. A little joy, a little care, along with dreams, are written there. This new day brings another year, renewing hope, dispelling fear. And we may find before the end, a deep content, another friend.” –Arch Ward

As we open the book on 2011, your Board of Trustees has a full agenda of important tasks to be accomplished. First, as I write this column, we are in the final stages of fine-tuning the operating budget for 2011 in keeping with the guidelines set forth at the July 26, 2010 congregational meeting. We’re pleased to announce that our 2011 pledge drive successfully generated a total of \$77,510 in pledges from 69 pledge units and plays an important role in determining the extent of the programs and services we are able to offer. Second, we are also diligently preparing for our annual meeting to be held Sunday, January 23, 2011 following the service. Committee chairs and board members are busily preparing their reports, including the budget, which will be distributed to all of the congregation’s members and friends in conjunction with this important event. The board urges everyone who is on island on January 23 to attend the annual meeting and let your voice be heard. (For those of you seasonal folks, we will once again be holding a mid-year congregational meeting in the summer and we look forward to your participation.) Third, we are moving forward with the formal transition plan that has been agreed to by Reverend Brooks and the board. We have already begun soliciting participation by interested members who wish to be on the interim minister search committee and have been pleased by the willingness on the part of so many who have volunteered to serve in this capacity. A formal announcement of the committee, which will be appointed by the board, will be made in early February and from there the group will begin their important work. Fourth, the third in a series of three “congregational conversations” will be led by Rev. Beth Miller, our experienced UUA consultant, on Sunday, February 12, as we continue in the process of healthy congregation building. The board hopes you will plan on participating in this important work as we prepare for the arrival of an interim minister in August. This is a summary of the schedule for 2011:

- January: Members submit their names to be considered for a position on the search committee for an interim minister.
Annual meeting January 23.
Visit from the UUA Transition Advisor.
- February: Interim Minister Search Committee appointed by the Board of Trustees
Rev. Beth Miller leads 3rd Congregational Conversation, February 12.
- March: Interim Minister Search Committee presents congregation search documents to UUA transition office.
Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner dinners.
- April: UUA transitions office presents us with a list of interim minister candidates.
Interim Minister Search Committee begins interviews with candidates.
- May: Interim minister selected by search committee and approved by Board of Trustees.
Public dedication ceremony for the opening of the restored sanctuary.
- June: Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner dinners.

- July: Annual July 4 celebration and reading
Mid-year congregation meeting July 17
Rev. Jennifer Brooks' last Sunday in the pulpit, July 31.
- August: The interim minister starts on August 1.
Building and Grounds Committee oversees parsonage renovations.
- September: Church wide picnic on Tuckernuck Island.
- October: Guess Who's Coming to Dinner dinners.
- November: Church wide ice skating potluck party at Nantucket Ice.
- December: Winter solstice ceremony at sunset at Alter Rock.

As you can see, there is much to be done and also to look forward to in the coming months. As I said in a column at the beginning of last year, people can be divided into three groups: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what happened. I hope you'll join the board in being someone who makes things happen in 2011 and beyond. We need your time, talents and financial commitment. As always, I welcome your feedback and comments. I can be reached at 508-228-7892 or at craigspery@aol.com.

Craig Spery – President, Board of Trustees

Music Notes

Martin Luther King Interfaith Service - The MLK Interfaith Service will be held at the Summer Street Church on January 17. Anyone, from any church on the island, who would like to sing with the choir should come to our choir rehearsal that day at 11:00 AM. The service is at 12:00 noon, with a nice lunch afterwards. Members of the Women's Chorus of Nantucket will join with the Unitarian Choir and others to sing Patty Griffin's "Up To The Mountain". Other music that day will include music by the New Life Ministries Praise Band, dancing by New Life's young dancers, and Leah Hull will sing "God Bless The Child".

Choirs- For the children's choir, in addition to our little rehearsals after church, I would like to have a once-a-month get together with any children who are old enough to read, and we'll work on some special music, fun songs, and more difficult songs. I'll be in touch with the Sunday school parents at some point to see what would work best for a time. Perhaps it could be on one Thursday a month, from 4:00 to 4:45 PM. Or maybe it could be on one Saturday afternoon each month for 3/4 of an hour. The adult choir meets every Thursday from 5:15 to 6:30 PM; and then on Sunday from 10:00 to 10:30 AM. We could use your help if you can sing. It's ok if you have to miss a Sunday here and there. It's ok if you can't read music.

Music Committee - Meets monthly. The chairperson is Jack Reindel. Other committee members are Susie Jarrell, Meg Hunter, Eidy Venzor and Catherine Hull. We are looking for more people.

Class for young children at NCMC - Starting in January, I will do a monthly class for 2 and 3 year-olds and their parents on Friday mornings, the second Friday of the month, at 10:00 AM. Please refer to NCMC's website or call 228-3352.

Marcia Hempel – Music Director

South Church Preservation Fund

Work in the auditorium is proceeding according to schedule. Most of the walls have now been cleared of the several layers of paint that had been applied in renewing and replacing the century and a half year old Carl Wendte paintings. In the process, much additional information about his work has emerged. This will be incorporated into a proposal for the new decorations, to be received with plans and drawings from EverGreene Architectural Arts sometime during the next two months. We expect to then seek suggestions and support from the Society before the actual work begins. As walls are cleared, repairs of the plaster surface are also being accomplished. At the same time, we continue to explore new lighting and other possible improvements such as new carpets, refinishing the lectern and pew caps, and renewing upholstery.

There is continued success by the Major Gifts committee as we grow gradually closer to having in hand all the funds needed to complete the work. Also, planning with the Society has been initiated for an appropriate celebration when, in May, the space will be reopened for church and community use. It is our hope that this can be accomplished in a way that will allow inclusion of the many year round and summer residents who have so generously supported the *Campaign for the Restoration of the Historic Meeting House*.

Leslie W. Ottinger – President, SCPF Board of Directors

Newsletter Editorial Policy (Adopted by the Board of Trustees 11/23/10)

The responsibility for the editorial policies and practices of the church newsletter rests with the Board of Trustees. The newsletter coordinator is responsible for the production of the newsletter and for implementing Board policies.

The Primary function of the newsletter is to inform the congregation of church programs and activities. Space and emphasis will be allocated according to the following priorities:

- Communications from the Board, the staff and church committees
- Communications from the minister
- Information about Sunday services
- Information about religious education programs and classes (all ages)
- Information about all-church functions, e.g. annual pledge drive, congregational meetings
- News of church members/friends; brief announcements of members' special needs
- District and denominational news
- No letters to the editor to be published. They are to be forwarded to the Board.
- No editorials or opinion pieces to be published, except for Minister's column.

- As space permits, community news and announcements of activities of organizations of particular interest to the church or its members

Every newsletter item must have the name and daytime phone number of the person submitting the article and should be submitted to the newsletter coordinator by using email. The newsletter coordinator may edit material that is too long or that contains incorrect grammar or spelling, and to refuse material that is not appropriate; however, every effort will be made to be inclusive.

Any questions or problems concerning the newsletter should be addressed to the coordinator. If the newsletter coordinator seeks guidance, the Executive Committee is to be consulted.

Fair Trade

Through the efforts of our Peace and Justice Committee, fair trade coffee, tea and chocolate have been available for several years, first in the Activities Room and now in the church office. Fair trade is a financial relationship between producers, sellers, and consumers based on the principle of equity within the exchange of goods. Equity is achieved via creating a platform for trade that is transparent and therefore accountable for the just treatment of all producers. This includes providing market avenues that allow marginalized producers the opportunity to sell, ensuring humane working conditions, and all the while protecting environmental and cultural factors that play into the production process.

There are nine main principles by which all fair trade abides: create opportunities for marginalized producers, develop transparent relationships, build capacity, promote fair trade, pay promptly and fairly, support empowering working conditions, ensure children's rights, cultivate environmental stewardship, and respect cultural identity. It focuses in particular on exports from developing countries to developed countries, most notably handicrafts, coffee, cocoa, sugar, tea, bananas, honey, cotton, wine, fresh fruit, chocolate, flowers and gold. The practice of fair trade places the communities involved in both selling and buying products as the primary focus, attempting to create a partnership which is beneficial to both parties. These products help build pride, independence and community empowerment for small farmers and their families in Latin America, Africa and Asia. A coffee processing plant in El Salvador, community stores in Columbia, medical clinics in Mexico, rainforest preservation in Costa Rica, new schools in Peru, agricultural training in Tasmania – these are examples of initiatives co-ops have taken in their own communities with income from fair trade. By buying and using these products, we become a vital part of this effort.