

It was both painful and inspiring to say farewell to Helen Savage last week. If you would like to contact her in California, her address will be:

The Village at The Palms, apt. # 120
55 Broad Street
San Luis Obispo
CA 93405

Helen was a marvelous friend to us all and I, for one, will miss her a great deal. As a member of the Search Committee that brought me here, she was a fountain of support, good advice, humor, and an inner balance that felt like a rare kind of wisdom. She did everything here--Standing Committee, host of the book group, Caring Network, Learning Community, office volunteer--but as wonderful as those things were, we will miss her not because of what she did, but who she was. She was a friend.

To honor her, our Standing Committee "invented" a new award. For some years, there has been discussion about creating an annual award for some member who, through the years, has offered unusual and sterling work to support First Church, and when we learned this August that Helen was going, we hurriedly created "The Bradstreet Award" (named for America's first published poet, Anne Bradstreet, and a member here). This spring, at our Annual Meeting, we will present a new award, because, frankly, there is a back-log of very worthy potential winners! And maybe that someone will be you...

I note with happiness that our Margaret Shepherd, one of America's great calligraphers and artists, has just published a new book, *The Art of the Personal Letter*, which I bought two of for Christmas gifts! And I apologize for noting this in a blog and not a personal note (the subject of a previous book of Margaret's)

I also note, in the realm of publishing, that my son Paul's (and my) book, *Douglass and Lincoln*, will be published in paperback this December (with about 50 other Lincoln books celebrating his 200th birth anniversary). An excerpt from it will be featured in this month's American Heritage, and it was selected by Kirkus magazine as one of their "Best Of" for 2008.

Now available is *Love and Death*, Rev. Forrest Church's lovely new book about facing mortality after a long siege with cancer. I cannot recommend this book more highly, and it too would make a wonderful present--it is full of wisdom, humor and life *as we should all live life*...Forrest, minister at All Soul's UU Church in New York City, is a former intern and assistant minister at First Church.

I have long promised not to tell people how to vote as a UU minister--but no one ever said I couldn't tell you *how I am voting*--and I am voting **No** on Question One. It would destroy the social fabric of our state, and hurt people who are already hurting more than enough. And no one ever said I couldn't say this--Please vote. It has never been so important. It's so important I want to vote twice, but I can't. But I can encourage you to make your ideals and ideas heard.