Rev's Reflections

Building Connections

Joe and I were recently visited by our friends Holly and Mark, who live in Northern California, where Holly and I used to work together in a commercial construction company. It was the first time for either of them being in New England. Like us, they are nerds who love history and architecture, so Holly wanted to start by visiting the home of an ancestor, John Alden. Yes, *that* John Alden, the cooper on the Mayflower who traveled unattached and later married Priscilla Mullins, a relationship romanticized by none other than Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Honestly, I was super impressed by her lineage, and still was even after we learned from the docent that that there are literally millions of descendants, most of whom have joined an organization called the "Alden Kindred of America." If I'm not mistaken, there are more members of that organization than there are Unitarian Universalists in our association of congregations. But I digress.

The house in Duxbury MA, just north of Plymouth, was amazing. The original 10'x30' house that John built for his family of 12 is long gone, but the house his son Jonathan later built is still there. It has cedar shakes for siding, logs for interior posts and beams, two staircases like the kind you'd find in a boat, and windows, doors and trim all carved by hand.

As the docent spoke, I closed my eyes and imagined the Aldens living there, drawing water from the well, lighting fires to cook, and reading by candlelight. I imagined the hands cutting, nailing and painting each board, each bit of trim. I imagined all of the visitors who have been through in the last four centuries. I felt like I could feel the presence and impact of every one of them, not individually but collectively.

Tomorrow (9/28) ten or so of us from UUCSC will be joining Habitat for Humanity to build a house here in South County with one of their partner families. I can't imagine we'll have a huge physical impact in just four hours of a yearlong project. But I do know that we'll be part of a group of

hundreds of people who will join a family to build a home that will support them for generations to come, and maybe even change the course of their history.

It's not likely that a child of the founding family of this new homestead will grow up to be as famous as John or Priscilla Alden. But it is likely that that child — like most children — will have thousands or even millions of progeny over the coming centuries.

Maybe someday someone will stand in that house and imagine everyone who has ever lived there, and everyone who had a hand in building it. What an honor to be part of that.

In Peace,
Rev Denis