



THE SOUTH COUNTY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF SOUTH COUNTY

VOLUME 22 ISSUE 11

DECEMBER 2013



December Services

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES ARE AT 10:00 A.M.



December 1

Dreydls, Drums and Druids – Rev. Dr. Judith Smith-Valley

December is a sampler of cultural and religious holidays crafted to deepen spirituality and find ways to brighten life and the coming winter. Hanukkah begins November 27th and extends until December 5th.

We will light a Menorah and the first candle in the UU Advent Wreath.

December 8

Am I My Brother's Keeper? Reflections on Crime, Punishment, and Forgiveness

– Roberta Richman

Is there any alternative to locking people up? Are we reducing crime and protecting ourselves by doing so? Can we forgive people for their crimes, even after they have paid their debt?

Roberta Richman spent more than thirty years working for the R.I. Corrections Department.

For ten years, she was warden of the women's prison. As Assistant Director of Rehabilitative Services, she focused on preparing incarcerated men and women for reentry into their communities.

December 15

Seeking Light – Rev. Dr. Judith Smith-Valley

In this season of light we gather in all the light and light-making aspects possible. Let us prepare for the Winter Solstice to observe the "return of the sun." Join us for the third Sunday of UU Advent.

December 22

**The Colors of Christmas – Rev. Dr. Judith Smith-Valley, Worship Leader
& Pam Santos, Director of Religious Education**

Come for a multi-generational service to celebrate the Unitarian Universalist symbols and colors of Christmas. We will sing a few carols, too. Join us for the fourth Sunday of UU Advent.

Monday, December 23 at 7:00 p.m.

**Christmas Eve Eve Candlelight Service – Rev. Dr. Judith Smith-Valley, Worship Leader
& Michael Galib, Music Director**

Our traditional UU Candlelight Service will celebrate with special choir music and carols, readings and stories. We light the candle of Christmas in our Advent Wreath and share that light with the entire congregation present. Family and friends are especially welcome.

December 29

Jesus of Nazareth, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr.:

Their Lives, Their Messages – Hank O'Reilly

Why did these three men have such an impact on humanity? Have their messages been forgotten? Are they waiting for the world to respond?

OUR HOME IS AT LILY PADS PROFESSIONAL CENTER, 27 NORTH ROAD, PEACE DALE, R.I.



THE SOUTH COUNTY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

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Karen R. Ellsworth, Editor

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UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF SOUTH COUNTY

www.uusouthcountyri.org

OUR HOME IS AT LILY PADS PROFESSIONAL CENTER, 27 NORTH ROAD, PEACE DALE, R. I. 02879

(401) 783-4170 • uucscri@yahoo.com

Services and Children's Religious Education on Sundays at 10 a.m.

*We welcome all individuals without regard to race, color, physical challenge,
sexual orientation, age, or national origin.*

Rev. Dr. Judith Smith-Valley, Accredited Interim Minister

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Pam Santos, Religious Education Director

Michael Galib, Music Director

Kathleen Carland, Office Administrator and Calendar Keeper • uucscri@yahoo.com • 783-4170

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In Between Time

Rev. Dr. Judith Smith-Valley

Accredited Interim Minister



When my children were young, a favorite aunt always sent them an Advent Calendar to help count the days until Christmas arrived. It was usually a simple card with 25 small doors—one for each day. I continued the tradition when our grandchildren were young. Anticipation is a wonderful feeling.

And the first Sunday of December was a time for crafting gifts and making their own Advent Calendars at our UU congregation. Now I enjoy the UU Advent Wreath with its four candles, one lit for each Sunday before Christmas. I hope to see you on Sundays in December and at your unique UUCSC-tradition Christmas Eve service.

The Transition Team and I recently began our plans for two winter events. We realize that December is a busy time for family and friends, so it is wise to not add to your obligations this month. But save a space on your new 2014 calendar for two dates:

First, we hope you will join us on January 5 after worship and coffee hour for a Q & A Session. Many of you have questions about the interim time or even wonder about next year's minister search. You are invited to bring your questions (or e-mail them to me after New Year's Day if you think they might require research). I will attempt to answer.

Second, we are planning an Appreciative Inquiry Event on Sunday, February 9 from 10 to 2. We will be asking not only "What's Right with the World?" but also "What's Right with UUCSC?" The event will include worship, lunch and the workshop. Childcare will be available, and the children will participate also. More information will be available after the holidays.

Interim time is a time of discovery and waiting. The following prayer is a reminder for us this Advent Season:

You keep us waiting.
You, the God of all time,
Want us to wait
For the right time in which to discover
Who we are, where we are to go,
Who will be with us, and what we must do.
So thank you . . . for the waiting time.

– John Bell, from *The Westminster Collection*
of *Christian Prayers*, compiled by Dorothy M. Stewart

May your Holidays be wonderful and your life be blessed. May your sorrow and joy be mixed and balanced, as is Life. May you be filled with the Spirit of Love.

Warmly,

Rev. Judy

P.S. The UUCSC Staff and I will enjoy a vacation between Christmas and New Year's Day. The church office will be closed for the week.

The President's Letter

At the November meeting of our Board of Directors, the main agenda item was a thoughtful and thought-provoking presentation by Aline Couture on Stewardship and the annual pledge drive.

Aline served on the Stewardship Committee last year, and she is willing to share what was learned last year with the new Stewardship Committee.

Money is an uncomfortable subject for most of us, but it is a vital part of all of our lives. This Congregation is no exception. Without sufficient funds we will cease to exist as an organization. It can be a difficult process for many of us, including myself, to reconcile a place of spiritual enrichment with the reality that I also have a responsibility to contribute my time, my talent and my cash to help keep this place going. For those who have been members of religious organizations for most of their lives, this may be a familiar process, but for those of us who come to this Congregation with little experience in religious organizations, it takes some getting used to.

Your Board, as your governing body, will lead the stewardship process by first setting the vision for the canvass in the coming year. We will be meeting in a mini-retreat in early January to discuss what the UUCSC needs to accomplish with our members' hard-earned money.

In January, when the Board will set the vision, the Stewardship Committee (ideally three people) will need to be in place. Also in January, Social Events will host a kick-off dinner to build enthusiasm for the upcoming canvass. In February, the Stewardship

Committee needs to establish the details of how the canvass will be conducted and recruit members to help.

On the first of March our annual pledge drive begins, and by April we hope to have most of the pledge cards in, so that the Finance Committee can craft a budget based on what folks have pledged.



The budget must then be presented to the Congregation at the Annual Meeting on the first Sunday in June.

In other business:

- The Board passed a motion to strongly recommend that the Finance Committee investigate the possibility of making credit card payments and electronic funds transfers available for donations and pledges.
- A motion was passed to add three hours per week for our Office Administrator, to accommodate an increased work load in the office.

- A motion to make the minutes of Board meetings available on the website was tabled pending more information about whether the minutes would be in a protected members-only link or open to everyone. In the meantime, the minutes will be posted in the Oneto Community Room about a week and a half after the Board meeting each month. A more timely posting of minutes will serve two purposes: to make Board actions more accessible to the Congregation, and to remind Board members of what action items they need to accomplish before the next Board meeting.

Board of Directors meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m., and anyone is invited to attend as an observer.

Members wishing to have the Board consider a policy change should submit a written request in the form of a proposal by e-mail to any Board member at least ten days before the meeting. Any supporting information should accompany the proposal. The agenda is set the Wednesday before the meeting, and the Board members need this lead time to familiarize themselves with the proposals.

Matters that do not involve a policy decision should go to the appropriate committee or to the Program Council. If you are not sure who that would be, you should contact the Past President, Nancy Rose, who chairs the Program Council. — *Sterve Harrison*



The Music Corner

by Mike Galib, Music Director



Hear ye, hear ye, UUCSC-ers!
Choirs singing exultantly,
trumpets ringing off the walls,
the organ swelling triumphantly,
rumbling the floor beneath your
feet.

Well, all right, I concede that the carpet might eat some of the trumpet, and we're short an organ, but Christmas Eve Eve is nonetheless upon us! The choir has been working hard since last month to prepare the music, and it promises to be another beautiful service. Please join Reverend Judy, the UUCSC Choir, and me on Monday, December 23, at 7:00 p.m.

We are lucky to have excellent guest musicians returning to contribute to the service—singers for each of the four choir sections, as well as a fantastic trumpet player.

A few folks have previously wondered why hired musicians are necessary, and so to the curious mind, here are some thoughts:

As an amateur choir singer, hearing and observing the practices and musicality of a

professional is indispensable to blossoming as a musician. More music can be learned quickly since they have support within their section. When volunteer singers need a week off, there's no worry that the ranks will be so dwindled that the music can not be performed.

In our case, several of our wonderful choir members already know they will be away for the holiday, and the help of professionals will be indispensable to perform the Christmas repertoire. In performance, the choir members feel emboldened, confident, and, as the final benefit, the congregation intuitively senses and derives great enjoyment from the resulting musical unity and power. In short, what is standard practice in all churches is indeed part of our annual tradition here at UUCSC.

Please come enjoy the service and music with us! The church is always packed, so while it's best to arrive early, not too much so—the doors traditionally have opened one half hour prior to the 7:00 p.m. service, at 6:30 p.m., to allow folks time to settle in. See you there!

Celebrate the Coming Light

The Women's Spirituality group will meet on Wednesday, December 18 at 6:30 p.m. for a Celebration of the Coming Light. We will connect winter solstice and light dawning traditions and share reflections on how light is showing in our lives.

Please bring any item, short reading, or thoughts that speak to you of the coming of the light in your personal experience. We'll also join in a candle lighting ceremony to celebrate our communal light.

Arrive at 6:15 for social time, and we'll gather to light the chalice at 6:45.

This meeting will take place in the youth room, in the lower level of the building. All women of UUCSC are welcome! – Sally Barney





MONEY MATTERS

News from the Finance Committee

The Finance Committee would like you all to know that our new and wonderful bookkeeper, Tracey Wilson, has been working with Harry Buffum, our current Treasurer, and Will Bender, our former Treasurer, during the past few months. Tracey is bringing all of our files into one QuickBooks account. Tracey has also met with Jeff Berry, our Collector, in an effort to retrieve our income reports in the format that dovetails with our past reporting procedures. As with all change, there is an adjustment and learning curve. But when all is in place, it will be more efficient. We are all very grateful to have found such a competent person to help us in this latest step in our growth as a congregation. If anyone is interested in meeting Tracey, she will be attending our December Finance Committee meeting. We would love you to join us.

Also to keep in mind . . .

For those of you who are fortunate enough to take advantage of the IRA Required Distribution rule because you have reached age 70½, we wish to remind you that if you decide to pay your pledge or make a donation to UUCSC in 2013 from your IRA, the amount you give does not count as part of your adjusted gross income for the year, and therefore is not taxable. The transfer counts toward your required minimum distribution for the year. It is important to put this in motion before the middle of December, because the rollover expires on December 31, 2013.

If you would like more information, please do call Marcia Boyd or Aline Couture.

From the Office Administrator

New Directory: The new Directory will be sent electronically in mid-December. If you have any changes to your information, please send them to the office at uucscri@yahoo.com by December 16. The office will print a few paper directories; you can pick one up on Sunday, December 22.

Deadline Change: All submissions to Highlights and the Sunday Insert should be sent to uucscri@yahoo.com by Tuesday evening. This will allow adequate time for office staff to prepare all publications for Thursday printing.

Holiday Closings: The office will be closed the week after Christmas: December 26 through January 1. The office will reopen on Thursday, January 2.

Wishing everyone a beautiful holiday season. – Kathy Carland

How you can help Philippines typhoon relief efforts

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) and the Unitarian Universalist Association have joined together in a special appeal to assist Philippines relief efforts.

As it does in all natural disaster relief initiatives, the UUSC will work directly with



established partners in the areas most affected by the typhoon.

The focus for fund distribution will be on those survivors most likely to fall through the cracks of traditional rescue and relief efforts because of geography, ethnicity, religion, or other factors that create barriers to receiving help.

If you missed the UUSC special collections on Sunday, November 17 and 24 for this important relief effort, you can still help by donating on-line at www.uusc.org/haiyan.

As of late last month, more than 2,600 individuals had contributed nearly \$291,000 to the UUSC-UUA Joint Philippines Typhoon Relief Fund.



Religious Education News and Events

By Pam Santos, Director of Religious Education

Weaving UU values through the generations.

I have noticed a familiar trend in RE over the past couple of months: Grandparents are bringing their grandchildren to church! This is familiar to me as it was my own grandmother, Georgiana Hansen, who shared with me her strong Unitarian Universalist faith. Long after my own parents drifted away from attending church, I would look forward to special times with Grandma Georgie at the North Shore Unitarian Universalist Church outside of Chicago. Christmas Eve candlelight service, special chorus events, even the yearly rummage sale, were great times to spend with Grandma.

Beyond simply attending UU services, Grandma Georgie showed me what it meant to live your faith. She delighted in the wonders of nature, she spoke out against injustice, she welcomed those seeking shelter, and she shared generously with those in need. Although it has been twenty years since my grandmother has passed, she is still my moral compass. When faced with a challenging dilemma I often ask myself, "What would Grandma Georgie do?"

So you grandparents out there bringing your grandchildren to church— Way to go! You are sharing your UU values in a profound way, and your grandchildren are paying attention. Keep up the great work.

Penny Hall explains . . . "I was so glad to bring four of my grandchildren to RE on two different Sundays recently. Everyone made them feel very welcome! Our three-year-old enjoyed playing with the other children in the nursery and the older ones had a great time with the K-2nd grade class. They all want to come back again! I just wish they lived closer."

We welcome visitors in the RE program, so if you have a little one visiting and would like to have him or her spend some time in the classrooms, please consider yourself invited.

Coming Events in Religious Education

December 1 - Service Sunday. We will create a giving tree to help support a family in need during the holiday season.

December 5 - RE Committee meeting from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. We welcome new members!

December 6 through 8 - Senior Youth Group retreat at Cedar Hill Retreat Center.

Our "Share the Plate" collection on Dec. 8 will go to the Jonnycake Center of Peace Dale

The mission of the Jonnycake Center of Peace Dale is to improve the quality of life for individuals and families by providing comprehensive assistance to those in need of food, clothing, and household items and through individual and systemic advocacy for individuals and families.

Members of our congregation volunteer in the Jonnycake Center's thrift shop and at the food distribution center. Please give generously to this essential organization on Dec. 8. — Jean Bowen



Letters to the Editor

What do you believe?

To the Editor:

What do you believe? What do you believe in as a member or friend of the UUCSC?

I venture to guess that the only things we can agree upon for sure are our Seven Principles. This is what brings this group of independent minded souls together. We are often distrustful of organizations. We have a strong aversion to dogma and often need to know “why?” before we accept any kind of rules.

This individualism can also work against us as an organization. Any group that desires to further its beliefs and help make the world a better place must be able to work together. The group must have a competent and organized system of governance. They must have an efficient infrastructure to get daily tasks completed. They must have dedicated members who believe in what the organization stands for and be willing to support the furthering of those beliefs with their time and money. And perhaps most importantly, when those big controversies inevitably arise, the members must remember to use their core beliefs to help each other face those issues.

I have heard some folks say they really hate the politics part of this Congregation. They are dismayed by the disagreements and infighting and the petty argu-

ments that sometimes arise.

I too find these things distasteful, but I also see them as the result of humans being human and working together in a group. Since we do not tolerate any dictates from above, divinely inspired or otherwise, we have to settle these issues amongst ourselves.

This can prove to be extremely difficult when tempers flare. In time, these hard feelings will subside, but we need to minimize them when they do happen by remembering that we all are working from the same base of beliefs, and we are working with the best of intentions, but we are all very different. Now since most of us do not believe in Hell, that means this path must lead to a better place; a place where we can work together in a safe and loving environment while remaining independent (and yes, sometimes stubborn) folks who want to further our Seven Principles.

For me, seven is way too many to keep in my head. I don't even try anymore. I keep one in my head, paraphrased to fit my own preferences, of course. When people ask me what this UU thing is all about, I tell them that basically, we believe that everything and everyone is somehow connected, that we are all part of the same thing, and that we have to take care of the earth and each

other. That either begins a discussion, or I get that “Oh . . .” look, and we move on to other topics. Either way, I believe it plants a seed.

If you are as tired and dismayed as I am at the strife and divisiveness and evil in the world around us, then you probably want to change it. The only way that can happen is for folks who see a better way to band together. By working together, we can voice our beliefs and be heard above the din. By pooling our time, talent and treasure we can become strong enough to stand up against big business and big government, which seem to be merging into one entity.

Building a strong Congregation here at Lily Pads, on the banks of Saugatucket Pond in beautiful Peace Dale, Rhode Island, is an excellent place to start, and if you want to walk the walk, a good place to start is with our annual pledge drive. If you are good at organizing and understand the importance of money in an organization, then we need you on our Stewardship Committee. Contact Aline Couture if you would like more details.

It is vital for us to have strong leaders in this role who can plan an effective campaign and recruit folks to carry it out. Our continued existence depends on it.

— Steven M. Harrison

The First Christmas Tree in New England

The tradition of the decorated Christmas tree was introduced to New England by Charles Follen (1796-1840), a Harvard professor and Unitarian social activist.

Born in Darmstadt, Germany, Follen came of age under the influence of the Napoleonic Wars and their repressive aftermath. Idealistic youths like Follen found the situation intolerable and joined revolutionary student organizations, agitating for reform. In the midst of this turmoil, Follen managed to earn a law degree from the University of Giessen and soon afterward became a lecturer at the University of Jena.

When a conservative author named Kotzebue was assassinated, Follen was twice arrested and tried for conspiracy in the murder, but the authorities could find no evidence against him. Fearful for his liberty and his life, Follen fled the country. He went to Basel, then Paris, and finally came to America.

After less than a year spent learning English and “networking,” Follen landed a job at Harvard in 1825 as the College’s first German teacher. He doubled as the instructor of a subject then coming into vogue, gymnastics.

Follen found the freedom of American society immensely refreshing and flourished in his adopted country. In 1828 he married Eliza Lee Cabot, one of the brahmanic Boston Cabots. Through her, he got to know some of Boston’s most celebrated figures, including William Ellery

Channing. Under Channing’s influence, Follen began studying for the ministry.

In December of 1832, Follen, remembering the German Christmases of his youth and wishing to recreate the magic and beauty of a decorated tree for his two-year-old son, went out into the woods near his home and cut down a small fir. The tree was set in a tub and its branches hung with small dolls, gilded eggshells, and paper cornucopias filled with candied fruit. The tree was illuminated with numerous candles.



Harriet Martineau, an English Unitarian and journalist who was visiting Boston at the time, described the scene at the Follens’ Christmas party: “It really looked beautiful; the room seemed in a blaze . . . I mounted the steps behind the tree to see the effect of opening the doors. It was delightful. The children poured in, but in a moment every voice was hushed. Their faces were upturned to the blaze, all eyes wide open, all lips parted, all steps ar-

rested.”

As a naturalized American citizen, Follen took up the fight against slavery. His abolitionist principles lost him a job as pastor of All Souls Church in New York City. Harvard did not renew his professorship in 1835 and supporters, including the abolitionist poet John Greenleaf Whittier, later said that it was his outspoken views that cost him his Harvard position.

Relieved of his teaching duties, Follen wrote, preached, and lectured widely. In 1839, he received an invitation to preach to a small Unitarian congregation in East Lexington, Mass. He accepted, but left to take a more lucrative position as tutor.

Follen returned when the East Lexington congregation came up with the money to hire him full time and to build its own church. He designed the octagonal church that still stands, laid out so that the minister would not be elevated above his parishioners.

Follen did not live to preach in the church that bears his name. He was killed in 1840 at the age of 44 in a fire on board the steamship Lexington while crossing Long Island Sound.

The Follen Community Church commemorates his introduction of the Christmas tree by lighting a tree on its front lawn every year.

Adapted from an article by Ken Gewertz in the Dec. 12, 1996 issue of the Harvard University Gazette.

MUSIC AT LILY PADS

Saturday, December 14th at 7:30 p.m.

The Deadly Gentlemen

with Cold Chocolate

'Roll Me, Tumble Me,' the Deadly Gentlemen's third album and Rounder Records debut, boasts ten winsome examples of their playfully irreverent, vibrantly rootsy songcraft. Although the Boston-based quintet employs acoustic guitar, banjo, fiddle, mandolin and double bass—a lineup that's usually associated with traditional bluegrass—their music defies conventional genre restrictions, filtering a bottomless assortment of influences through their own decidedly distinctive songwriting sensibility and uncanny instrumental rapport. The result is timelessly resonant music that's rooted in tradition, yet effortlessly contemporary and boundlessly entertaining.



The band is led by Crooked Still's Greg Liszt on banjo. Greg, among other exploits, has a Ph.D. in molecular biology from MIT, and has toured with Bruce Springsteen. Sam Grisman, on upright bass, is the son of mandolin legend and 'Newgrass' innovator David Grisman. Fiddle player Mike Barnett was a child prodigy, and has been a touring musician since age 15. Mandolin whiz Dominick Leslie also has

a luminous history, and has played with, among others, Lily Pads alumni The Bee Eaters and Sandra Wong, and Noam Pikelný of Punch Brothers. Guitarist Stash Wyslouch is an acoustic guitar innovator from a heavy metal background, and has played with, among others, Eric Robertson and the Boston Boys and Blue Moose and the Unbuttoned Zippers.

Opening the show is Boston-based Cold Chocolate, a bluegrass/American/roots band offering their own fresh take on acoustic traditional music. They are led by multi-instrumentalist Ethan Robbins, who played Lily Pads in March 2013 with Three Tall Pines.

Don't miss this exciting end to Music at Lily Pads's calendar year. This will be special.

Doors open at 7:00 p.m. and the music starts at 7:30.

Tickets are \$18 advance, \$20 at the door.

Tickets are available at BrownPaperTickets.com and locally at Sweet Cakes Bakery and Café, the Alternative Food Co-op, and Looney Tunes II.

Music at Lily Pads is online at www.musicatlilypads.org and on Facebook.

The Advent Garden Labyrinth Walk

Sunday, December 15th at 4:30 p.m.

Please join us for a meditative experience as we walk the spiral labyrinth by candlelight.

A spiral path of evergreen boughs.

A single candle's flame in the center.

One by one we walk, winding our way to the middle,
light our candle, and begin the journey back out again,
adding our own light to illuminate the path for others.

Children are welcome, in the company of an adult.

If you can help with set-up at 3:00 p.m. or clean-up, please contact Sally Barney. We need five people for each crew. If you are attending with children, please do not plan to help set up or clean up with your children present (to preserve the magical quality for the young 'uns). If you have greenery to donate, please leave it on the tarp near the front door ramp before the service on Sunday, Dec. 15th.



When the weather outside is frightful . . .



If winter weather makes travel difficult or dangerous, our Sunday morning service will be cancelled.

Congregation president Steve Harrison and Rev. Judith Smith-Valley will decide early on Sunday morning whether the service will be cancelled. The cancellation will be announced in the following ways:



- If you are on the church e-mail list, you will receive an e-mail.
- A notice will be posted on the UUCSC website home page.
- An announcement will be broadcast on TV channels 12 and 64.
- Announcements will be broad-cast on radio stations WHJJ (920 AM), WWBB (101 FM), WHJY (94.1 FM), and WSNE (93.3 FM).

THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF SOUTH COUNTY
27 NORTH ROAD
PEACE DALE, RI 02879

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Dashing thro' the snow,
In a one-horse open sleigh,
O'er the hills we go,
Laughing all the way;
Bells on bob tail ring,
Making spirits bright,
Oh what sport to ride and sing
A sleighing song to night.

– James Lord Pierpont (1822-1893)

James L. Pierpont, who wrote "Jingle Bells," was the son and brother of a Unitarian ministers. He composed ballads, polkas, and songs for traveling opera and minstrel troops. His most famous composition, originally titled "The One Horse Open Sleigh," was published in 1857 but did not become popular until after his death.