



THE SOUTH COUNTY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF SOUTH COUNTY

VOLUME 24 ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 2015

February Services

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

February 1

The Sunshine of the Soul – Rev. Jan Knost

Norman Cousins, the world-renowned columnist, author and world peace advocate, was hospitalized with an illness that seemed to be incurable. With the cooperation of his doctor, he tried a different tack, filling his days with humor of all kinds. It worked, and the book that followed was a best-seller.

On this Sunday, we'll investigate humor and the laughter it entails.

February 8

Artistry and Creativity: Why They Matter – Susan Moreland

Our popular culture encourages us to consume art and entertainment rather than create our own. Susan Moreland, choir member and chair of the Music Committee, will discuss how engaging in creative and artistic pursuits such as performing music, writing a poem, or even concocting a recipe, results in not just personal happiness but, ultimately, stronger communities.

February 15

Counting the Ways of Love – Rev. Jan Knost

A day after the national hysteria of cards, letters, dinners out and family remembrances, let us look a little more deeply into the joy of learning what human relationships are really about. Though the topic may be repetitive, it would seem that it needs repeating, given the harsh picture of the world in this age of danger and tragedy.

February 22

Finding Meaning and Purpose as We Age – Bill Flynn

Bill Flynn, Executive Director of the Senior Agenda Coalition of Rhode Island, will share lessons from Viktor E. Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, social science, and personal experience that all point to our older years as a precious opportunity for spiritual growth and purposeful work.



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

THE SOUTH COUNTY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

Karen R. Ellsworth, Editor

Deadline: The 20th day of each month

Material should be submitted by e-mail to kellsworth6@verizon.net

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.

Staff Members

Rev. Jan Vickery Knost, Interim Minister

Pam Santos, Religious Education Director ■ **Michael Galib**, Music Director

Kathleen Carland, Office Administrator and Calendar Keeper

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David Floyd, Music at Lily Pads Coordinator ■ *Susan Strakosch*, Worship Committee

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Food for thought

What would happen if our congregation decides to hire a half-time minister rather than a full-time settled minister? The UUA has told us that we will have the best choice of candidates if we offer an appropriate financial package. Who would be willing to work half-time — someone who is just out of school? Would an inexperienced minister be able to meet our needs?

In the congregation-wide survey taken last fall, as well as at myriad "Search Party" meetings, a majority of members said they want a full-time minister. Now it's up to each of us to decide how we want to support that goal.

To make pledging more convenient, we now have a feature on our website that allows members and friends to have a weekly or monthly pledge taken from their bank account and deposited into the UUCSC account. Just go to the "Members: Pledges and Donations" page (<http://uusouthcountyri.org/wp/members-page/>) under "Community" on the UUCSC website (<http://uusouthcountyri.org/wp/>) and follow the directions to the "Secure Payment" portal.

Your Stewardship Committee consists of three members of the congregation — Charlie Donnelly, Cindy Cole Berry, and Peter Himmel — who have voluntarily assumed the responsibility of helping our congregation reach its goal to hire a full-time minister. Please feel free to e-mail Cindy or Peter with questions or comments.

For the Time Being . . .

by Rev. Jan Knost

It was spring. Lorna and I were on a pulpit exchange in England with our two older children. One of the expected duties of the visiting minister from America was to attend the local Rotary Club where his opposite was a member. There I gained a new understanding of human relations.

The speaker was a black man from Tanzania. Dressed in a three-piece suit and speaking with an Oxford accent, his words were clearly stated and powerfully articulate. In essence, he was dealing with the true meaning of the word "brotherhood." As best I can, I will try to reconstruct what he said on that day.

You here today look at me and perceive me as different. My skin is very black and yours is white. My roots are in a country you know very little about. My religion is foreign to you, as are some of my peoples' customs.

We have learned that knowledge is power. When we lack it, we tend to feel insecure and we are apt to fear that which is different from us. And so, good friends, as we sit at this luncheon, know that that difference is not what it seems.

As I thought of his words those many years ago, I realized that the antithesis of fear is trust. It demands much of a person willing to risk and trust other people who seem different. We think of our neighbors here and away and wonder where we might have failed in building a citadel of trust and understanding. I know I surely do.

But it seems to me that this congregation is about accomplishing that goal. The service on Martin Luther King and the resulting conversation proved that to be true. The arrangements to visit the local Temple to worship with our Jewish brothers and sisters proves that to be true. The work going into planning joint meals shared with the Muslim community at URI proves that to be true.

Finally, the following words came from one of you after the MLK service and conversation: "This past week's service and follow-up was the most compelling experience of my UU life."

Could one say anymore? And thank you to that dedicated individual for sharing an honest sentiment that applies to us all.

"Till soon, all of you,

"The Rev"

The President's Letter

"I don't like them (. . . or him, or her), and I don't want anything to do with them."

How often do we hear that? Or a discussion between folks who have opposing views quickly turns to heated argument where winning or embarrassing the other is the only goal? Understanding another's viewpoint is not even remotely possible in either situation. Armed extremist groups who slaughter others in the name of their beliefs are at one end of the spectrum, but we can find other examples of intolerance in all sorts of places. Some are overt, and some are well disguised. They happen all around us.

It is not new, and it is probably what humans have done since there were humans. The attitude that 'I am right and you are wrong' has led to countless conflicts. It will not change any time soon, but that does not mean that we, as UUs, cannot do something to move in another direction.

Rev. Betty, who was our first settled minister, had a good method of opening a door when she encountered folks who held

views that were radically different from her own. She would not argue. Instead, she would respond with, "Tell me more about that." I have tried this approach, and it begins a discussion rather than an argument.



I believe that discussion leading to understanding is exactly what is often missing when people with opposing opinions and beliefs come into contact. Listening to what someone believes does not mean you agree with him. It does not mean you have to change his mind. Getting to know why someone thinks differently than you does not mean you condone or support that way of thinking.

We can be a common ground for such discussions. We can be the group who can bring opposing viewpoints together in a respectful and civil gathering to

build understanding. And it can begin in our own backyard. Our UU Principles equip us with the ethical and philosophical foundation for such an undertaking, and our energy and determination can give us the strength to carry through on such a daunting process.

Who are our neighbors? Who are the folks we see in the supermarket or at the gas station? Most of the time we probably move through our day passing strangers who live within a couple of miles of us. We may see them as "crowds" or traffic, but not as our neighbors. Living in a college town and a resort area probably exposes us to a larger proportion of folks who are just visiting for a week or a few semesters, but as townies, how well do we know our fellow townies? Especially the people who are a different race, religion, or ethnic heritage? Probably not as well as we could.

Yet these are the folks who share the same small space on Earth with us. We buy from the same stores, drink water from the same aquifer, send our waste to

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A special invitation

We have been invited to a dinner prepared by the Muslim community of Kingston at the Masjid Al-Hoda (the Mosque of Guidance) on Saturday, February 14. A short prayer service will take place at 5:30 p.m., just before the meal, and we are invited to participate or observe. The mosque is located at the Muslim Community Center of Kingston, 60 Fortin Road. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Linda Whyte Burrell and note any special dietary restrictions.

On Sunday, March 8 at 11:30 a.m., we will host a Sunday Brunch for the Muslim community, and we have extended an open invitation to them to attend our service at 10:00 a.m. on that day, which is Selma Sunday. More details will be announced later this month.

News from the Ministerial Search Committee

Now that we're through the long holiday hiatus, it's a good time for the Ministerial Search Committee to bring the congregation up to date on our efforts so far and our plans for the future.

We will now be meeting every two weeks. We have completed the self-study portion of the search, which aimed at assessing what qualities we as a congregation want in a minister. The next event in our search will be a full-day

"Beyond

Categorical

Thinking"

workshop led by

Rev. Keith Kron,

the UUA Director of
Transitions

(formerly called

Ministerial

Settlement). His

office provides

counsel and

resources to congregations planning for

changes in their professional ministry. The

workshop will be on a Saturday, probably in

March, and Rev. Kron will deliver the sermon at

our Sunday service the next day. The workshop

will be open to the entire congregation, and we

encourage everyone to attend. The date will be

announced later this month.

Our Congregation Record is more or less

complete, and after some polishing by Jean

Bowen, it will be submitted to Rev. Judith



Campbell, who has been the midwife for this process from the beginning.

The Committee has started to assemble items such as articles, pictures, and biographies for the Congregation Packet, which is scheduled to go live in December of 2015. The Packet is a bright and eye-catching portrait of our congregation designed to capture the eyes and interest of ministerial candidates who might apply.

This might be a good time to review the qualities the congregation has indicated that it wants in a minister. Full-time ministry would be the most optimal. The congregation has indicated that it is looking for someone who, among other things, will be a part of the community at large; someone who cares about social issues as well as pastoral care to congregation members.

In order to attract someone of this caliber, it will be necessary that offer an attractive and reasonable salary package. Our committee wants to remind the Congregation that an insufficient salary package will reduce the number of appropriate candidates. We hope that you will keep this in mind.

We will publish updates in future issues of the newsletter. Please watch for them. In the meantime, if you would like more information about the process of finding a minister, visit the UUA's Transitions web page:

[\(http://www.uua.org/careers/ministers/transitions/\)](http://www.uua.org/careers/ministers/transitions/).

– Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Cole Berry

The President's Letter

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the same repository. We breathe the same air and send our children to the same schools. We pool our money to support town services.

We have ample opportunities to put our principles to work in our

own community by getting to know the people in our community. When divisive issues arise, we can be the folks who can bring those groups together and foster solutions around compromise rather than through victory and defeat. As we expand our out-

reach into the community, let us all recognize that this is at the core of who we are and what we believe.

Let us help each other to build on this process. The place is here, and the time is now.

– Steven M. Harrison

Small Group Ministry news

This month, several of our Small Group Ministry groups are going to try something new. Borrowing materials from the "Theme Based Ministry" approach of the First Unitarian Church of Toronto, they are going to devote one of their two meetings per month to a common topic. This month the shared topic will be kinship. It was chosen by the representatives of the groups at their own monthly meeting to complement Rev. Jan Knost's February 15 sermon entitled

Counting the Ways of Love. Before their meetings, all Small Group participants will receive the same materials to help them contemplate this theme. Some examples: What is kinship? UU's speak of interdependence with all, which is easier intellectually than emotionally. Does "all of humanity" really feel like kin to you? Why or why not?

The idea behind this approach is to expand the base of common spiritual exploration within the congregation. We're also planning an after-church sample

Small Group experience for those who are curious about the program, on a date to be determined.

If you are interested in participating in Small Group Ministry please contact Sally Barney. Our four existing groups are full at this time, but we do have an ongoing enrollment and will begin a new group as soon as there are enough people on the list who can meet at a common time.

Namaste,

Sally Barney

Coffee Hour: A Perspective

Since the beginning of human evolution, the gathering, sharing, and giving of food has been central not only to our survival but to our social, emotional and spiritual development as a species. One of the first acts of newborn babies is to open their mouths and root for a nipple, and begin to take nourishment.

Is it any wonder, then, that feeding ourselves and others is such a powerful manifestation of community and connection? We offer and accept food as a precious gift and symbol of concern, support and solidarity when we're sick, when dealing with a death, when welcoming someone new to our neighborhood, when we celebrate the wonderful occasions in our lives. Breaking bread together is also a symbol of our spiritual lives. Christians, Jews, and Muslims all recognize the rituals associated in sharing food with each other and guests.

So what about us UUers? Very few congregations offer the ritual of communion, or practice or observe the Sabbath blessing of bread. How do we share food in a way that conveys community, caring, nurturing? It has been said that the coffee hour after the weekly worship service is the UU communion— and I think that is an apt metaphor.

Let's start thinking about our coffee hour as a holy and sacred extension of our worship service: a way to honor our time together, a way to welcome visitors and newcomers, and a way to check in with our friends and acquaintances to support, nurture and share what's important— ourselves.

In the past, our coffee hour, and especially the task of organizing and hosting this part of our Sunday service, has been haphazard, avoided, dismissed, and even ignored. In the process of reorganizing our committees, the Board of Directors is considering moving the responsibility for coffee hour from the Hospitality Committee to the Worship Committee. Members of the Worship Committee are working on procedures to make sure everyone has the opportunity to offer gracious hospitality to their fellow congregants.

Please consider this act of communion one of the special blessings that each of us contributes to making UUCSC our spiritual home. — Nancy Rose





Religious Education News and Events

By Pam Santos, Director of Religious Education

From Toddlers to Young Adults

As the church year progresses, we have seen the bright faces of a number of new little ones. Families of young children have been stopping by for a visit. They want to know what the UUCSC has to offer young children. Timidly, parents allow their children to walk up the aisle to hear the 'Story for all Ages.' Unsure at first, children hold hands with new friends as the congregation sings "Go with Wisdom, Go With Wonder."

This is only the beginning. As they explore the nursery and classrooms downstairs, they find a sun-filled environment reflecting the warmth of meaningful activity. Small groups of children sit on the circle rug sharing pebbles of joys and concerns. In another classroom, children are peering through magnifying glasses taking a closer look at nature's details. Middle school children can be found attempting to paint with their mouths and feet as they learn about talented artists with limited physical ability, a lesson in empathy.

Should you be curious about the youth of this congregation, you could peek in on the Youth Room after a Sunday Service to observe teenagers preparing for a food drive as they listen to a speaker from Youth Pride. Recent graduates who were home from college gathered last month for pizza and a hearty amount of catching up.

It takes a village to raise a child. Here at the UUCSC, we are learning together to support children, youth, and their families in new ways. For it is the young ones among us that are our future. Feel proud to invite a family you know to take a peek at our Religious Education program.

Please contact me at 486-2694 with question, ideas, or if you are interested in volunteering.

Coming Events in RE

Sunday, February 1 – All Ages Birthday Party

Sunday, February 1 – Last Sunday to donate to Youth Pride food and toiletries collection drive

Last chance to donate to the Youth Pride drive

According to recent estimates, as many as 40% of homeless youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, compared with 7% of the general youth population. The most frequently-cited reason for their homelessness is family rejection.

For the past month, the children and volunteers in RE have been collecting food and toiletries for homeless and needy LGBTQQ youth. On Sunday, February 8, the donated items will be delivered to Youth Pride, Inc. (www.youthprideri.org) for distribution. Youth Pride is a Providence-based nonprofit agency that works on behalf of youth and young adults affected by sexual orientation and gender identity issues.

To see a list of the most-needed items, visit our website (<http://uusouthcountyri.org/wp/?p=1357>).

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27 NORTH ROAD
PEACE DALE, RI 02879



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

“Mrs. Joe was a very clean housekeeper, but had an exquisite art of making her cleanliness more uncomfortable and unacceptable than the dirt itself. Cleanliness is next to Godliness, and some people do the same by religion.”

– Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

Charles Dickens, born in Portsmouth, England on February 7, 1812, was the foremost English novelist of the Victorian era, as well as a vigorous social campaigner known for exposing the wretchedness of the downtrodden. His enduring comic characters are part of the culture. Although he remained attached to Anglicanism, Dickens denied the divinity of Jesus and attended a Unitarian chapel in London.