

THE SOUTH COUNTY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF SOUTH COUNTY

VOLUME 26 ISSUE 4

APRIL 2017

April Services

Sunday Morning Services are at 10:00 a.m.

April 2

Inspiration – *The Senior Youth Group*

At this youth-led service, members of our Senior Youth Group will tell us about their personal spiritual experiences.

April 9

The Need to Belong: Why We Share Our Lives – *Rev. David L. Helfer and the Membership Committee*

Animals of all sorts gather in tribes and prides, gangs and litters, herds and bands.
Humans come together, too, because we need each other.
New Members are welcomed today.

April 16

Easter Sunday

Coming Back to Life – *Rev. David L. Helfer and RE Director Pam Santos*

Sometimes what we think is death might fool us. Join us for this all-ages exploration of “hidden” life.

April 23

Mid-course Corrections – *Kathy Swink*

How do we develop the security and serenity that enables us be adaptable enough to successfully negotiate the inevitable changes life throws at us?

April 30

Poetry and Faith – *Lisa Starr*

Even those with a great capacity for faith sometimes experience emptiness and despair. For Lisa Starr, it is poetry that calls her back to what her heart and soul know to be true.

Lisa Starr, Rhode Island Poet Laureate Emerita, is currently completing her latest poetry collection. She lives in Westerly.



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. DAVID L. HELFER, MINISTER

Office telephone: (401) 284-3321 • e-mail: uucscminister@gmail.com

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

Church Office

Office Hours: Tuesday 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. ■ Wednesday 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. ■ Friday 10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Board of Directors

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Steve Harrison, Treasurer (2015-2017) ■ Mary Fulton, Clerk (2016-2018)

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At the Water's Edge

Rev. David L. Helfer



The oft-used aphorism, “nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes,” shines a light on the intention of the founders of this nation. The quote, most commonly ascribed to Ben Franklin, at the signing of the Constitution, is, in truth, optimistic in intent. Historians suggest that Franklin understood the Constitution as a living, changing document, never intended to offer unyielding statements of fact. Franklin recognized that the world would shift, that understandings would change, and that flexibility in governance was an absolute necessity.

And despite the abhorrence with which I greet many of the current Administration’s intentions and policies, that truth remains the same: our government structure is meant to be counterbalancing and yielding. Little is permanent.

This matters.

The current Resistance is based upon this assumption, that the course of history, no matter how aligned or opposed with one’s views, remains changeable.

I recently finished reading a recommended book, *The Plum Tree*, by Ellen Marie Wiseman. It is historical fiction, a first-person narration of a young German girl’s terrifying and horrifying witness of Nazi atrocities. Perhaps the book impacts me particularly intensely because I think of my late mother-in-law, herself a young German girl during the worst of World War II. Given my Jewish heritage, this is something she and I talked about infrequently, silently understanding the other’s emotions. Nonetheless, when she chose to speak of it, I listened intently. And in both the book and her words, I heard the same truth, that small acts of resistance created exponential opportunity for change during the darkest of times.

I knew then, and know now, that humans can do the unthinkable. Stranding refugees in Syria is no less horrifying than any other mass extinction. Ending healthcare for millions is violation of basic human rights. Refusing to fix contaminated water systems and invading tribal lands are all hallmarks of a government seeking to reach past its limits.

We do, and must, fight back. Not with weapons or hatred, but with love for those most vulnerable, with the certainty that we can change the worst of circumstances. Bans are opposed, sanctuary is given, love is extended in ways too myriad to count.

Nothing is certain.

And in that uncertainty, we find the needed flexibility to create a change in governance. The Resistance reminds us that we are not passive participants, but instead called forth as citizens of a democracy which needs our voices.

In the uncertainty that marks this time, there is hope. Within each and every individual who refuses to turn away, who becomes an active participant in our beloved democracy, change happens.

So face the darkness. Greet it with hope. And make change.

With faith, hope, and love,

Rev. David

The President's Letter

Rebirth and renewal are right around the corner

Spring . . . the season of renewal. Sitting at home in my office, listening to the spring rain falling outside my window, I am reminded of the enormous wonder that takes place each year at this time. With the easing of the snow and cold (which fortunately was less than usual this year, although it does cause me to worry about our changing climate), and the rains occurring often now to soften and wake up the sleeping seeds and plants, my mind always drifts to remember my sister-in-law, Martina Dalton (my husband's only sibling), and how much she loved the spring. It was Martina who brought to my awareness the existence of "Leaf Week."

Leaf Week is neither a national or state-recognized holiday. In fact, most folks probably go along in their daily lives not even realizing that they are experiencing Leaf Week. But I encourage you to be watchful, because pretty soon, sometime during the next month, you will start to see the signs. The red buds of the swamp maple trees come first. Then the willows start to show signs of life. The flowering bushes are next, with the forsythia leading the way, and the amazing pink-purple early azaleas that are so prevalent in this area. And sometime after these bushes come into full bloom, we start to see the bare beginnings of Leaf Week. In all of the trees— in our yards, along the

highways, on the back roads, across the fields— we start to see that lovely spring yellow-green appearing. Spring Green. It is the surest sign that winter is truly over and the time of earth's renewal has come again.



I feel much the same way about our UUCSC community. We did go through a harsh winter for several years— losing our first settled minister to retirement, and after that a rocky road with our initial interim minister. We felt something of a winter's thaw with our next interim, who served us all so wisely and well, but we were still adrift in our search and still had not emerged from winter's grasp. And then, a seed of hope emerged. After our first round search did not yield fruit, we took a leap of faith to continue into the second round, not knowing where it might lead.

Little did we know that in California, the recently-ordained Reverend David Helfer was also taking a leap of faith to toss his hat into second round search. Some-

times things just turn out exactly the way that they are meant to. We were not meant to emerge from winter too early.

As a congregation, we learned much in the "post-Betty" years. We learned much about ourselves and about each other, and we learned much about where we hope to go and about envisioning the minister who might help to take us there— or at least go with us as we are all discovering our paths together. I know that I could not really imagine at that time who this person would be. But as my own mother said so many times throughout my life, "It's just fate, Betsy," and finally, I understand what she meant. I do believe that fate played a role in bringing us all to this point in our spiritual lives together. And certainly, after experiencing the enormous and almost overpowering joy of this past Sunday's installation of The Reverend David Helfer as our settled minister, I know that we have moved into spring-time . . . into rebirth. What an exciting time to be a member of our UUCSC community!

Rebirth and renewal. On my back porch there is a light that lost its cover several years ago, leaving only the skeleton of the light. Three years ago, the sparrows discovered this skeleton and decided that in spite of the large lightbulb still in the middle (and still functional), they would use

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Our Second Settled Minister has been Installed

On Sunday, March 26, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of South County formally installed The Rev. David L. Helfer as its second Settled Minister. Rev. David would like to express his thanks to those whose efforts made the celebration possible.

What a beautiful installation we had! Thanks to everyone, as so many helped with setup and breakdown, cooking and baking, serving and supporting. A special thanks to the fabulous installation team of Linda Whyte Burrell, Natalie Herbermann, and Randi Marten, Jean Burke as Installation Marshall, Elise and Will Bender and their team of merry ushers, our wonderful senior youth, those such as Suzanne Marcy who arrived early and pitched in without question, and Barbara Pagh, photographer extraordinaire. And many others, I know!

And staff . . . Michael, I can't quite get over the musical extravaganza that you, Vijay, and the choir shared with us. And Pam, that stole is wonderful beyond words. Thanks to you, the parents, and the children.

I am thrilled to be "settled" with you.

In joy and gratitude, *David*

Neruda String Quartet at UUCSC on April 15

On Saturday, April 15 at 3:00 p.m. in our sanctuary, a very special event will take place. The New England Conservatory of Music's Neruda String Quartet will perform as part of our year-long celebration of the 25th anniversary of UUCSC. Our music director, Michael Galib, has made it possible for this outstanding ensemble to perform here.

The Neruda String Quartet is comprised of exceptional NEC students who were selected by a panel of professional musicians to take part in the NEC Honors Ensemble program.

To keep ticket prices affordable for everyone, UUCSC members and friends are invited to support the concert by making a contribution as a Friend (\$25), a Sponsor (\$50), or a Patron (\$100). Sponsors will receive one ticket; Patrons will receive two. If you would like to be a sponsor, please contact Betsy Dalton at elizabethmdalton@gmail.com or speak to her during coffee hour after this and next week's service.



Tickets are \$12 and can be purchased from Michael Galib or any member of the UUCSC choir. Don't miss this amazing afternoon of music!

Summer is almost here!

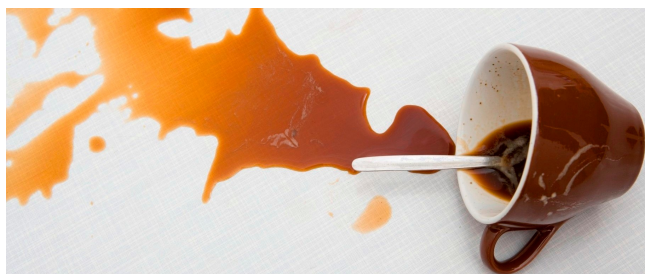
Generations of UUs have happy memories of the time they spent at the Ferry Beach Retreat and Conference Center in Saco, Maine (<http://www.ferrybeach.org/>), and at Star Island in the Isles of Shoals off Portsmouth, New Hampshire (<http://starisland.org/>). Both offer weekend or week-long summer programs for all ages and interests.

Essjay Foulkrod has been visiting both Ferry Beach and Star Island for years. She recommends both locations for their combination of stimulating activities and programs and relaxing atmosphere.

The brochures for this summer's programs have just arrived and are posted in the Community Room.

Coffee hour is fading fast

Picture coffee hour with no coffee or tea. I don't like it, but that's just me. I know that we are all busy and it takes a special effort to offer your services to minister to a large part of the congregation by



volunteering to come in early to set up for coffee hour. And then clean up. However . . .

A lively coffee hour is a great opportunity to strengthen our faith community and make visitors feel welcome. True, we can talk without anything to eat or drink. It just makes it nicer is all.

Coffee hour hosts do not need to bring anything, nor run the dishwasher. The dishwasher is run by someone trained to do that. And anyone in the congregation who chooses to bring snacks can do so on any Sunday.

Directions on what to do are e-mailed to you ahead of time and are available each Sunday on the snack table right next to the sign-up clipboard. We have *many* empty slots for the rest of the year. Please help if you can. If you have any questions, ask a member of the team— Ellen Perkins, Mike Henry or me. Thanks for your help in making us a warm and welcoming congregation. – Val Follett

A new dimension in the Small Group experience

Are you familiar with UUCSC's Small Group Ministry program? Well, get ready for a new paradigm. Since Rev. David came to us, we've been talking about how to expand our definition of Small Groups. Rev. David has been hoping to develop many new opportunities for small gatherings, including re-energizing our established Small Group Ministry program.

We'd like to introduce a new framework in which our Small Group Ministry groups would be re-named "Covenant Groups." They would be just one among several types of groups that meet intentionally for spiritual deepening experience, with a format including theme and deep listening practice. We'll add other kinds of groups under a new umbrella we'll call Small Group Ministries. These could be affinity groups such as Healthy Aging, LGBTQ, Parents of Young Children, Parents of Teens, UU Buddhists, or Hikers. There are many other possibilities. We may also offer a six-to-eight-week Spiritual Reflections group, as well as adding new people to our established SGM Covenant Groups.

To learn more, please join us after the service on Sunday, April 9 for a Chalice-Side Chat with Rev. David. Be sure to bring your ideas. – Sally Barney and Essjay Foulkrod, SGM coordinators

The President's Letter

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the skeleton of the light to build a nest. Several times that year I removed the straw and other materials, but they came back again and again to rebuild. Once, the light was mistakenly turned on and burned the nest and

almost the house. But I removed that burnt straw, taped down the switch to avoid such a mistake again, and the sparrows came back. Now, I no longer try removing the straw. My sparrows have made a permanent home in this light, and they love it— I can

tell from the constant chirping. I may change my light someday, but for now, we are all home. Here, and at UUCSC, we are all home. And discovery and Leaf Week are right around the corner. Smile. Spring is here.

- Betsy Dalton



Religious Education News and Events

By Pam Santos, Director of Religious Education

Where Do You Find Your Inspiration?

The high school kids of this congregation have been planning their yearly Youth Service, scheduled for Sunday, April 2. Their first task in this process was to agree upon a theme they could all identify with, support, and build on with readings, song, and sermonettes. The theme they chose for this year was "Inspiration."

Listening in as they formed their ideas and plans, I gained a better understanding as to who inspires them. What inspires them to be bold and brave enough to stand in front of the congregation and share their personal thoughts, ideas, and plans? After each Youth Service I hear from the adults how impressed they are with the self-awareness and maturity the teens have shown. This service is often our most well attended service of the year. On this Sunday the teens are the ones inspiring others. When I point this out to them, so often they dismiss the compliment. It is difficult for teenagers to imagine their lives, their thoughts, and their words are able to inspire others.

This is the work of our congregation—to help all of us, younger and older, to appreciate our individual ability to inspire others. We do not have to inspire by great deeds or incredible knowledge. As I look out at the congregation I am inspired by the mother who has experienced a loss in the family and brings her children to church for support. I am inspired by the couple who year after year welcome strangers to eat at their Thanksgiving table. I find inspiration in the older couple who continue to find a way, despite mobility struggles, to attend church each week. And I find inspiration from anyone who is confident enough to join the choir and lift their voices to inspire us all! And yes, I find great inspiration in the teens of this congregation as they navigate their way through the tricky, sometimes treacherous, path towards adulthood.

Look around you at the incredible, shy, outspoken, ordinary, and elusive members of this congregation and be inspired!

Upcoming dates in RE

Saturday, April 2 - Senior Youth Group Service

Community Service – making protest signs for the Peoples' Climate March

Sunday, April 16 – Easter Sunday Service for all ages

Sunday, April 30 – May Day celebration after the Service

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



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

***“The office of government is not to confer
happiness, but to give men opportunity to work
out happiness for themselves.”***

– William Ellery Channing

Channing was the foremost Unitarian preacher in the United States in the early Nineteenth century. He was born in Newport on April 7, 1780.