

# THE SOUTH COUNTY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF SOUTH COUNTY

VOLUME 26 ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2017



## January Services



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

**January 1**

**Shining a Light on Hanukkah – *Helene Gersuny, Peter Himmel and Barbara Holtzman***

A minor Jewish holiday that achieved greater attention by its proximity to Christmas, Hanukkah celebrates events of 2nd century Palestine when the Maccabees liberated their people from Syrian rule.

The story will be told in readings and songs

*This service includes our annual Fire Communion— we'll consign to the flames all our negatives from the past year.*

**January 8**

**Blanket Forts and Laughter – *Rev. David L. Helfer***

We'll remember how to balance activism and passion for justice with self-care and joy.

**January 15**

**Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's Continued Legacy – *RE Director Pam Santos with Rev. David L. Helfer***

In this multigenerational service, we'll test new ways of raising awareness about some of the most important topics of our time.

**January 22**

**Indigenous Empowerment – *Lorén M. Spears***

The exhibits and programs at the Tomaquag Museum in Exeter have educated generations of Rhode Islanders about the history and culture of the Native Americans in our midst, empowering the indigenous while enlightening the rest of us.

*Lorén Spears is director of the Tomaquag Museum. Under her leadership, the museum received the National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the nation's highest honor conferred on museums and libraries for service to the community.*

**January 29**

**Why Don't You See Me? – *Rev. David L. Helfer***

Those with hearing impairments, physical challenges, invisible illnesses, mental illness, or just general aging challenges frequently report feeling unseen and unheard. We'll consider the opportunity of Unitarian Universalism to respond more affirmatively.



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](mailto:kellsworth6@verizon.net)

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## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF SOUTH COUNTY

[www.uusouthcountyri.org](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:uucscminister@gmail.com)

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

**Kathleen Carland**, Office Administrator and Calendar Keeper

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***

Betsy Dalton, President (2016-2017) ■ Linda Whyte Burrell, Vice President (2016-2018)

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

Randi Marten (2016-2018) ■ Elise Bender (2015-2017)

Sally Barney (2016-2018) ■ Leah Canin (2015-2017) ■ Natalie Herbermann (2016-2018)

### ***Committee Chairs***

Carla Bowman, Membership Committee

Jean Bowen, Social Justice Team • Judi Marcy, Caring Connection

(vacant) Religious Education Committee • Mary Finnegan, Personnel Committee

Marcia Boyd, Finance Committee • Chris DePaola, Facilities Committee

Emily Jacobs, Music Committee • Linda Whyte Burrell, Social Events Committee

Val Follett & Mike Henry, Hospitality Coordinators

David Floyd, Music at Lily Pads Coordinator • Amber Kelley Collins, Worship Committee

Dave Ruede, Stewardship Committee • Penny Hall, Pastoral Care Committee

Dennis Bowman, Communications & Publicity Committee

*Karen R. Ellsworth*, Weekly E-News editor [kellsworth6@verizon.net](mailto:kellsworth6@verizon.net)

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# *At the Water's Edge*

*Rev. David L. Helfer*



This might be the least Christmas-y Christmas in recent memory.

As I write this, lights are shining, trees have been decorated, and the last stragglers are still shopping for the last few gifts.

It looks like Christmas. But it sure doesn't feel like it.

I've heard this same sentiment from many of you. Huge holiday celebrations have been scaled back in favor of smaller, more intimate gatherings. The usual push for material gifts has ceded to donations for those organizations doing good work near and far. Even the desire to celebrate has been muted.

In pondering the 'why' behind this shift, it is reasonable to conclude that the Christmas spirit, or what we're told it is, is being overshadowed by refugee crises and massive political changes domestically and abroad, as well as individual losses and life changes.

Moreover, for anyone who isn't a Christian, the transformation of a religious holiday into a month-long shopping spree might elicit feelings of sadness or frustration. If one is an atheist or a pagan or a Muslim or a Jew, for example, Christmas is a holiday to be endured rather than celebrated.

These words, however, are not a Grinch-like tirade on what's wrong with Christmas.

For the lessening of Christmas as a time of overindulgence has made way for a new sort of Christmas— the present of presence.

This holiday season, I see less stuff. And much, much more kindness.

We're talking with each other. Celebrating and grieving with each other. Laughing and crying with each other. We're caring for each other.

People, us included, are moving more slowly and deliberately, with more care about our impact upon each other and the larger world.

That's worth more than any other gift. My Christmas, my holiday wish, for you, then, is to remember that nothing is more precious than the beings in your life, the strangers you encounter, and the holding open of a space for others.

Christmas is about new life. This year, that is our lives re-enlivened with the joy of presence. May connections old and new sustain you through whatever 2017 has in store for us.

With joy and gladness,

*Rev. David*

# The President's Letter

## *In the New Year - Reflection and Rebirth*

Welcome to 2017! I must say that as the years keep rolling on by, I am drawn to reflect upon events of the distant (and not so distant) past and try to look at life from a broad perspective. Please allow me to share a few of my life's milestones that have brought me to this time, place, and purpose in this world— and encourage you to reflect back upon your own.

Decisions come in all shapes and sizes, and I suppose that the first big decision to change the course of my life was to attend URI for my undergraduate work. The decision to leave one's home state and start life in a whole new place, with all new people, can be quite daunting, and I know from conversations with many of you that you have experienced this either yourselves, or through your children. Moving one's life from the known to the unknown . . . will this bring joy, or sadness? Excitement or depression? Connectedness or isolation? We truly cannot know until we take those steps away from our comfort zones and venture out into the world. For myself, the road had its bumps, but in the end turned me toward the life's path that I continue today, as a mother, a professional, and a Rhode Islander. I'm glad that I took that step out of my comfort zone . . . it was worth the risk.

The next great decision that I'd say has focused my life was that of direction— and asking myself what held the greatest meaning for me. What could I see dedicating my life's work toward? The answer to this question, as often is the case, came gradually, through a path of varied experiences in and outside of school and formal lessons. Eventually,



it was my experience with the residents of Ladd School, our former state institution for persons with developmental disabilities (or as it used to be called, mental retardation) that was the guiding force directing me into education, and more specifically special education, the field I have worked in since 1976 and continue to love. While I learned much in my course work at URI, the lessons and the development of my thinking at Ladd School convinced me that this was a field where I could apply my gifts and talents in a truly worthwhile direction. They say that experi-

ence is the best teacher, and I whole-heartedly agree.

A very different life-changing decision came when I sat in the congregation of UUCSC for the first time. I had known little about Unitarian Universalism, being brought up Presbyterian, but I was searching for something that led me to the UUCSC. There are times in our lives when we know that we are searching for something— something to fill an empty space in our lives, something to help us to feel whole. This is what I have found at UUCSC. First drawn here by my love of music, I now find that the UUCSC community has grown to become such an important part of my life, and what brings meaning to my life. It's not always easy to find the right source to help fill one's personal need for connection. Connections can be elusive and at times, disappointing. In reflecting on my decision to reach out that January day to come and listen to the sermon, to hear the choir, and to be met with friendly faces, I realize that it changed my life. I'm happy that I followed my heart and reached out that day.

This New Year is a time not only of reflection, but of rebirth. For our UUCSC community, we have much to reflect upon in our 25-year past—much to remember  
*continued on page 5*

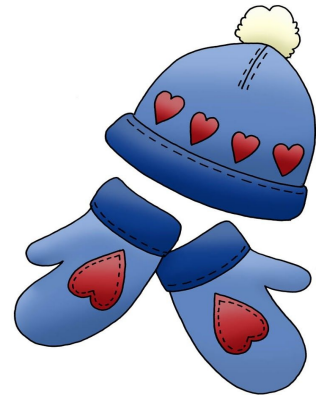
## Please help the RE children and youth with their February community service project for clients of Crossroads Rhode Island

On the first Sunday of every month, our children and youth participate in a community service project that benefits our Rhode Island neighbors and the environment. In December, the children and youth wrapped holiday gifts donated by our congregation for ten immigrant children who live in Providence.

In February, the congregation will again have an opportunity to support an RE community service project. The beneficiaries of the February effort are the homeless souls supported by Crossroads Rhode Island (<http://www.crossroadsri.org/>). Located in Providence, Crossroads helps homeless and at-risk individuals and families secure stable homes.

How can you help? All members and friends of the congregation can donate an item from the list below. You can leave your item in the collection boxes that will be available at church during January.

The RE children and youth will sort the items and put them in gallon-sized plastic bags on Sunday, February 5, and the bags will be delivered to Crossroads for distribution.



### *Items requested for Crossroads clients*

- Toothbrushes
- Sample or travel-size toothpaste, soap, shampoo, or lotion
- Combs
- Nail clippers
- Bandages
- Lip balm
- Socks
- Warm gloves
- Water bottles
- Mints, cough drops, gum
- Individual-serving-size cheese and crackers, peanut butter and crackers, or nuts
- Granola bars
- Single-serve juice drinks

The RE community service projects are organized by RE Director Pam Santos and supported by the Racial Justice Steering Committee, which reminds us that love is the spirit of this congregation and service is its prayer. Please help our RE children and youth with their community service project supporting Crossroads Rhode Island.

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## The President's Letter

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-ber and much to hold dear—but our eyes must be focused forward in order to grow and to bring life to our next 25 years! We have taken such a fine step in calling our minister, Reverend

David Helfer. But this is not a final step; no, it is the beginning of a new life for UUCSC with new risks to take, new experiences to have, and new connections to make, for all of us. The potential is great, if we have the courage and the resolve to follow our

hearts into some yet-unknown places. As we venture forth together, the future will surely be merry and bright.

Wishing a very Happy New Year to all,  
*Betsy Dalton*



# Our silver anniversary!

All this year, UUCSC is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Special events will take place all year to mark this important milestone. Some events to come:

- \* New Year's Eve Dance on Saturday, December 31 at 7:00 p.m. featuring the (((Repercussions)))
- \* Dinner with live music on Saturday, January 28, 2017 at 5:00 p.m.
- \* The Neruda String Quartet in concert on Saturday, April 15, 2017 at 3:00 p.m.
- \* Interfaith Worship Service on Sunday, May 21, 2017 at 10:00 a.m.

To mark this special anniversary, we're seeking donations toward the purchase of a new chalice for the altar. Please deposit your donation in the "Silver Box" or in the Offering plate, clearly marked "New Chalice."

## Why Do We Have a Hearing Loop?

You might not be aware that we've added a new technology to our Sanctuary that allows everyone to hear sound directly from the microphone without background noises or an echo effect. It's called a hearing loop.

A hearing loop is a thin strand of copper wire usually installed on the floor around the edges of a room. The wire radiates electromagnetic signals that can be picked up by hearing aids, cochlear implants, and receivers equipped with a telecoil.

If you think a hearing loop is only for people with a diagnosed hearing loss, think again.

If you're over 40, you probably remember how you needed to stretch your arms to read fine print. No one really wants to be seen with glasses at that age. You either joked about it or bit the bullet and picked up a pair of reading glasses.

My 40ish mail carrier sorts the mail with the building's foyer lights off. I turn them on. He turns them off. He's

responsible for a flurry of mis-delivered mail-swapping in my building.

What's this got to do with hearing? When my mail carrier makes reading mistakes, the errors are visible. But with hearing loss, it's the opposite. Hearing loss happens with age, especially after 65, but unlike farsightedness, it's invisible. Mistakes are not corrected; they're interpreted as social errors or just plain stupidity.

As we get older, we need to apply more energy and attention to listening. It's a subtle change, so we don't notice what we're missing. We focus on what we're getting. Unlike me and my postal carrier, there's no one to point out what you didn't hear.

Try a "loaner" set of hearing loop receivers at church. Just ask one of our ushers for a loop listening device.

Go to <http://www.hearingloop.org> to learn more about hearing loops.

– Myron Waldman

## Caring for Each Other: UUCSC's Agape Fund



Do you know that we have a way to help each other financially through moments of unexpected financial distress?

For a number of years, we have applied our Christmas Eve collection to our Agape Fund. The fund, administered by the minister, is used to support of members who might be in unexpected need. Assistance might take the form of gift cards for the local grocery store, or the payment of a utility bill, or something else entirely. It's an emergency fund, and it is entirely confidential.

Talk with Rev. David at any time if such help is needed.

## Inauguration Day human rights solidarity potluck dinner and video

This Inauguration Day weekend, like-minded people of conscience and people of faith will be grieving the inauguration of the next president of the United States. We are struggling to find ways to resist inhumanity to the vulnerable “others”—immigrants, people of color, women, people with disabilities, the poor, the LGBTQ community—that we fear will come with the new administration. As the president-elect is inaugurated, let us join together to plan our resistance.

On Friday, January 20 at 6:30 p.m., the Racial Justice Steering Committee will host a potluck dinner and a TEDx Talk video of Michelle Alexander discussing her groundbreaking book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The 2012 UUA “Justice” General Assembly in Phoenix, Arizona selected this book as the UUA’s 2012-2013 Common Read.

After the video, learn about the Racial Justice Steering Committee’s plans to help advance Rhode Island’s legislative reform initiatives to correct laws that target the poor and people of color. One set of bills cleared the Senate last session, only to die in the House. Michelle Alexander’s talk will help prepare us for the work ahead.

As we stand by our common principles to affirm

and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person, we invite all to join on this day of solidarity.

### *Express your concerns about the new administration*

During Rev. David’s “chalice side-chat” on December 11, members discussed the challenges facing the nation. We worry that the gains in issues we care about may be lost, and we’re distressed to think that our personal beliefs and values may not be preserved in the tremendous upcoming shifts in policy.

On Sunday, January 15 at 11:30 a.m., you’re invited to attend an all-congregation event that will engage you in an interactive and, we hope, an enlightening conversation about the social justice issues you care about. The Social Justice Team and Rev. David will conduct a “speed-dating” process in which you will be able to express your passions on the problems and challenges our country is facing. This illuminating exercise will enhance and shape our congregation’s social justice agenda.

For more information, contact Jean Bowen at [jeannbowen@gmail.com](mailto:jeannbowen@gmail.com).

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## Women’s March on Washington January 21

On Saturday, January 21, thousands will converge on Washington, D.C. to send a message to the new administration.

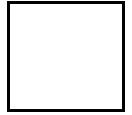


Organizers of the Women’s March on Washington (<http://www.womensmarch.com/>) want to send “a bold message to our new administration on their first day in office, and to the world, that women’s rights are human rights. We stand together, recognizing that defending the most marginalized among us is defending all of us.”

The march is a grassroots effort comprised of dozens of independent coordinators at the state level. The effort is led by four national co-chairs and a national coordinating committee. The march is for any person, regardless of gender or gender identity, who believes women’s rights are human rights.

For Rhode Islanders who can’t attend the Washington march, a Rhode Island Women’s Solidarity Rally will take place on the south lawn of the State House at noon on January 21. For more information about the local event, go to <http://womensmarchri.com/ri-local-rally/>.

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



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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"I am dead certain that human progress depends on those heretics, rebels and dreamers who have been my kin in spirit and whose 'holy discontent' has challenged established authority and created the expanding visions mankind may yet realize."

– Roger N. Baldwin

Roger Nash Baldwin, one of the founders of the American Civil Liberties Union, was a Unitarian. He was born in Wellesley, Mass. on Jan. 21, 1884.