

THE SOUTH COUNTY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION OF SOUTH COUNTY

VOLUME 25 ISSUE 9

OCTOBER 2016

October Services

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

October 2

If These Walls Could Talk – Rev. David L. Helfer

Imagine what we might hear if we could consult with ancient sources of wisdom.
How might that help us understand the world we inhabit now?

October 9

Thoughts on the Current Campaign – Norman Zucker

Norman Zucker, who taught political science at URI for 42 years, will share
his thoughts on the current state of democracy in the United States.

October 16

The Role of Faith – Rev. David L. Helfer

Several years ago, the Pew Foundation coined the term "nones" for those who don't affiliate with a
faith tradition. But who are the "nones"? Are they perhaps some of the most faithful among us?

October 23

Whose Democracy Is This, Anyway? – Rev. David L. Helfer

What have our first 200-plus years as a democracy taught us about self-governance,
equity, oppression, and unification? And as the schism grows ever wider between
red and blue states, does common ground remain?

October 30

Standing Up or Standing Back – Abu Bakr

Mr. Bakr, a protester himself in the 1970s, will talk about the African-American professional athletes
who are currently taking a stand by not standing during the playing of the national anthem.
*Mr. Bakr played basketball for URI, where he earned his bachelor's, master's and MBA degrees. He held a
number of prominent administrative positions at URI, retiring from the Office of Community, Equity and
Diversity in 2013. He continues to work as an independent consultant and a college basketball broadcaster.*



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

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.

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At the Water's Edge

Rev. David L. Helfer



As the blessed rain falls steadily outside my window, wetting the prematurely brown leaves, the change of the seasons is clear. The Fall Equinox is arriving.

There's something beautiful about fall, in addition to the often-spectacular color show offered by the waning days of the deciduous leaves. A comfort emerges in the form of cool nights, slowing (or at least predictable) schedules, and comfort foods. Sweaters and jeans offer a tangible reminder of the invitation to find warmth and a sense of safety.

I'm reminded of how earlier cultures worshiped, and frequently also feared, the gods that they understood to control the weather. Prayers and other forms of supplication helped these peoples to feel safer about the forthcoming seasons. Whether in the form of dances or offerings, efforts were made to abate the mighty weather gods, so that crops might flourish and safety be ensured.

Many of these earth-based rituals survive to this day, if more oriented toward mother earth than toward an omnipotent being. Solstice celebrations offer a point of reconnection with the earth, both here beneath our feet and far away where others tread. Most major religions— from Judaism with its High Holy days to Islam with its celebration of Eid El-Adha— mark the shifting of the seasons as more than solely a change in weather, and instead a point of importance on their religious calendar.

There is a particularly prescient sense of possibility at these times. I've heard it referred to in Greek Mythology as a thinning of the boundary between the living and the spirit world.

It's a time widely believed to be a wisdom source. If we listen to whatever we might understand the sacred to be, is there more to learn?

Whatever does, or doesn't, exist beyond the boundary of our mortal beings, this much is sure: for as long as there have been humans, this time of year has been an invitation to reflect, reassess, and refocus. Where are you energies being spent? Do you need more time in community or in contemplation? Is the pace of life sustainable, and if not may small shifts be made which offer easing?

As you, and we, move through the changes of the season, let us allow the questions to arise and come forward. May this time be rich in opening to new possibilities.

With blessings and love,

David

The President's Message

Welcome, autumn!

The leaves will soon begin to turn, and we do rejoice to be fortunate enough to live in beautiful South County, RI. It is a time when we think of cider, and pumpkins, and the changing of the seasons—and this year, as we reflect upon our first 25 years together as a UU congregation, it brought my own thoughts to reflect upon the path that brought me to become a member of this UUCSC community. Please allow me to share a brief history of this president's spiritual journey.

As so many others in our UUCSC community, I did not grow up as Unitarian Universalist. My roots go back to the First Presbyterian Church of Caldwell, New Jersey - believe it or not, the church of Reverend James Caldwell, the "fighting parson" of the Revolutionary War, and General George Washington's main clergyman. The town of Caldwell was named for him, and the church was as traditionally Presbyterian as is possible, I suppose. My father's maternal family (originally from Pennsylvania) date back to serving in that war, and were long-time Presbyterians. Attending this protestant church included (as I remember it) regular attendance in church school, memorizations of all of the books of the Bible, singing in the choir (we had both junior and senior youth choirs, as well as adult choirs), attending and singing hymns at Sunday services with my family (and watching my Dad slip into snoozing more often than not), 11:00 p.m. Christmas Eve services, contributing to the church using my own pledge envelopes, watching

my brother David playing basketball in the church youth league, and I'm sure I'm forgetting a few more things. It was, as I said earlier, a very traditional Protestant church experience.

As I went off to college at the University of Rhode Island, I found no reason to connect with a church. My life was full of new friends and new ideas and new explorations—and studying figured in there a bit, too. In my sophomore year, I met the man who would, seven years later, become my husband. Bob had been raised Roman Catholic, so we did not share a common faith background and did not seek to be part of a church. Our spiritual life lived and grew through other paths.



When we moved to Providence years later, with two young sons, I began to feel the desire to connect the boys to a spiritual entity in some way. A dear friend invited me to come and try out singing in the choir of the First Unitarian Church in Providence. I went, and I was so touched by the sermon of the then-minister, Rev. Tom Auburn, that I wanted to come back—and I loved singing in the choir. My sons participated in RE there, too.

When we moved back down to South County in 1994, the commute was just too long and we stopped attending. From that time

until 2011, organized religion did not play a significant role in my life. Rather, dealing with life was my greatest challenge—as a full-time educator, a mother of two, a wife and partner, a caregiver for my father and mother, life was full of daily joys and challenges. Between 1996 and 2007, I lost my father, mother, sister, sister-in-law, aunt, two uncles, and my dear husband, Bob. Enough said.

Fast forward to 2011. I returned to Rhode Island after a year in my post-doctoral program in Boston, and I was feeling a bit lost. After such an intense year, I was home again and wanted something more—new connections, new friends, new something.

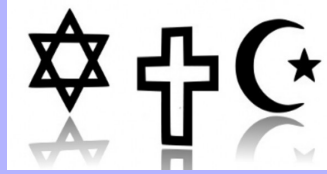
One January day I decided to check out the Unitarian Church in Peace Dale that I had heard about. I remember that I was greeted warmly with a great hand-shake from David Crockett. I sat in the back of the sanctuary and listened to Rev. Betty's sermon. After the service, I went up to Mike Galib and asked if they could use another singer in the choir. And here I am!

Why do I share all of this? It's my own personal story, but I know that each of us has our own unique and personal path bringing us to the UUCSC.

In this year of historical importance for our congregation, and of great tensions and searching across the nation, I encourage you to reflect upon your own path here, and consider where you want to go in your faith journey. Taking time to reflect is healthy and often enlightening. May peace be with you, and with our troubled-but-still-wonderful world.

- Betsy Dalton

A Christian, a Jew, and a Muslim discuss Islam



Thursday, October 13 • 6:15 to 8:15 p.m.

Maury Loontjens Memorial Library • 35 Kingstown Road, Narragansett

PANELISTS

- William Bartels, professor philosophy and religion, URI Department of Philosophy
- Abdelnasser Hussein, Principal of the Islamic School of Rhode Island
- Katrin Jomaa, assistant professor of political science and philosophy, URI Departments of Political Science and Philosophy (joint appointment)
- Rabbi Aaron Philmus of Temple Torat Yisrael in East Greenwich

Moderated by Jim Buxton, adjunct professor of political science at URI and former international relations and global studies teacher at South Kingstown High School.

Preregistration is recommended – call 789-9507 or go to www.narlib.org.

How much do you know about fracking?

Join the Green Task Force's book discussion group to learn more

The rapid spread of hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") has temporarily boosted U.S. natural gas and oil production and sparked a massive environmental backlash in communities across the country. Fossil fuel advocates are trying to sell fracking as the biggest energy development of the century. Are they right?

In *Snake Oil: How Fracking's False promise of Plenty Imperils our Future*, Richard Heinberg says our shale oil and natural gas reserves are actually a lot smaller than the industry would like us to believe. He discusses what the frackers have to do to keep up production when the first wells run out.

The Green Task Force will host a discussion of the book in four sessions. The first one will be on Monday, Oct. 24 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Three more sessions will follow every other Monday (on Nov. 7, Nov. 21, and Dec. 5). Larry Kelland will moderate.



Sixth annual Local Foods Banquet is on Friday, October 21

Our sixth annual Local Foods Banquet is on Friday, October 21 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Come celebrate the bounty of the season, the taste of fresh local food, and the pleasures of good music and good company. Please bring a dish to share that's made from locally-grown or sustainably-grown ingredients.



After dinner, everyone will enjoy live music from our own Nick Smith, and a sing-along with the ever-colorful Raging Grannies of Greater Westerly (<http://www.phys.uri.edu/nigh/RagingGrannies/>).

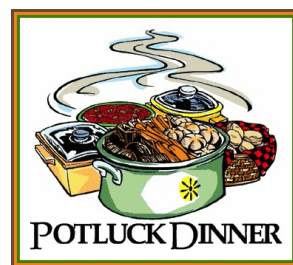
It would be great if you could bring your own plate, cup, flatware, and napkin, too.

This event, sponsored by the UUCSC Green Task Force, is free and open to the public, so bring your friends and neighbors. Reservations are helpful but not required. For questions, contact Lisa Petrie at teonlisa@juno.com or 364-3002.

Are you a newcomer? Please come to our Newcomers' Potluck Dinner on Saturday, October 22

Each spring and fall, we offer Path to Membership classes for people who are interested in joining the congregation or just want to know a little more about our denomination and our congregation. The classes are always preceded by a potluck dinner that gives newcomers an opportunity to get to know us, and each other, in an informal setting.

This fall's Newcomers' Potluck Dinner will be at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 22 at the home of Dennis and Carla Bowman at 183 Twin Peninsula Ave. in the Green Hill section of South Kingstown. If you're planning to attend, please get in touch with Carla at (401) 792-1116, (804) 380-9936, or by e-mail at cbow5@aol.com.



Two Path to Membership classes are scheduled for this fall. A class on Unitarian Universalist history and theology will be held after the service on Sunday, November 13, and a class on how our congregation functions will be held after the service on Sunday, November 20. A New Member Ceremony will take place during the service on Sunday, December 11.

Watch for more information about the classes in the November newsletter.



Religious Education News and Events

By Pam Santos, Director of Religious Education

One morning last week I took a long walk with my dogs in a wide open field. The field is maintained by the South Kingstown Land Trust and had not been planted for hay like so many of the fields in South County often are. I was encouraged to see huge amounts of milkweed growing naturally in amongst the wild grasses.

As a child I used to collect a big jar full of milkweed leaves and drop in 2 or 3 monarch caterpillars, which were easy to find. As they munched away at the milkweed leaves, they would grow plump, eventually ready to climb to the top of the jar, hang upside down in a J, and turn themselves into a beautiful jeweled chrysalis. Of course, around ten days later the miraculous emergence of a beautiful butterfly would captivate us all. We knew what was going to happen, had seen it before, yet each and every time the transformation was witnessed it was truly unbelievable.

Monarch populations have been in decline for a number of years now. Many attribute this to fewer and fewer fields of milkweed. Fields are plowed up and planted with a single crop, and “weeds” are often eliminated with herbicides. Large patches of milkweed are hard to find, and the caterpillars need the milkweed to become what they were meant to be.

While on my walk this morning I noticed several monarch caterpillars happily dining on the field of milkweed. I even saw a chrysalis that had been recently vacated! I was so happy to know this field provided exactly what the caterpillars needed to develop.

After my walk I headed in to work, to prepare for Sunday’s Religious Education classes. I checked the curriculum and lesson plan for each of our three classrooms. The supply cabinets provided most of the craft supplies needed. I took a quick drive to the dollar store for some special items. On the way back I stopped at the library to pick up a specific book to be used for one of the lessons. I made copies of game cards that would be used for another lesson. I checked the chalices and made sure a matchbook would be available. I contacted my generous and creative volunteers by e-mail and provided them with their weekly briefing on coming lessons. And finally, I tidied up the three classrooms, making sure each one was inviting, safe, and ready for its Sunday morning participants.

I felt like I was cultivating a robust field of milkweed. Here was the right environment for our children to become what they were meant to be. Here were lessons about peace, games encouraging diversity, and songs promoting fairness. Here were crafts instilling a sense of home, projects encouraging service, and ritual enhancing a community of acceptance. Here our children could discover their place in the natural world, to become stewards of nature and advocates for justice.

The field of milkweed provides what is needed for the caterpillars to thrive and develop. Our Religious Education programs provide for our children what is needed for them to become the young people we need in the world today. Watch and be amazed at what is developing!

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



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

"Humanism is not the abolition of religion but the beginning of real religion. By freeing religion of supernaturalism, it will release tremendous reserves of hitherto thwarted power."

– Charles Francis Potter

Charles Francis Potter (1885-1962), a Unitarian minister and theologian, was an vocal advocate for social reform, including birth control and women's rights. He founded the First Humanist Society of New York in 1929, and the Euthanasia Society of America in 1938. He was born in Marlborough, Mass. on October 28, 1885.