



Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Fork

December
2011

977 Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike
PO Box 1444, Bridgehampton, NY 11932

www.uucsf.org

We are a spiritual community.

Community Winter Solstice Celebration

Saturday, December 17, 2011

Children and families are warmly welcome. Bring a generous dinner dish for 6 people, and a drum or an instrument if you choose.

4:00 PM: A Labyrinth Walk (free) led by **Linda Mikell**

6:00 PM: Potluck Supper by candlelight

7:00 PM: Winter Solstice Ritual accompanied by drummer **Dave Chorowski**

7:30 PM Winter Solstice Celebration and community dancing continues with the fantastic Brazilian drummers of **Escola de Samba Boom**.



Suggested donation: \$10 for adults \$2 for children

Donations benefit the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Fork and the local food pantries.

For more information see our e-mail, admin@uucsf.org or call 631-537-0132

New Energy from a Wider View

Surveying newsletter readers, we learned that there is interest in the wider Unitarian Universalist Association. Pam Wittenberg has volunteered to screen the monthly Metro District announcements and choose one for your attention.

In accepting her new job, Pam wrote, "I think that our congregation would only benefit from sharing in the offerings of other UU congregations around us. It makes you feel as though you are connected to something vast and exciting, and so it adds new energy."

This month's choice connects with UUCSF's current work in revamping our Social Justice work. A new District Environmental Justice Council is being organized by the Rev. Peggy Clark and Dr. Frances Sink.

The Council's primary purpose is to educate UU leaders in global, regional, and local environmental justice issues. The goal is to gather and train at least one member from each congregation with the purpose of concentrating the group's efforts at community organizing and heightening the impact on the critical issues of our day.

The first meeting of the Council will be January 21, 2012, at the First Unitarian Society of Westchester (Hastings-on-Hudson NY). The Council will meet three times in 2012. If you have any questions, please contact either frances.sink@gmail.com or pclarke@uuma.org. RSVP before January 10.



Thoughts from Alison ...

The Holidays Come, Calling and Recalling



That cluster of days – weeks, actually – breezily referred to as “the holidays,” is upon us. Actually, it feels like we’re already well into them. Newspapers want to know our holiday service plans by the end of October, just about

the same time commercials and ads for sales roll out, filling the airwaves and Sunday paper inserts. Travel plans must be booked, with who’s going where, sorted out.

All of this spending, cooking, gift-giving, visiting, planning even includes those who would not identify as Christians, who would not say, “I’m celebrating Christmas as the story of Jesus’ birth.” Christmas has become the largest, most commercialized secular holiday of all time.

Now, don’t get me wrong. I’m not advocating “putting Jesus back into Christmas.” I firmly believe that for those to whom Jesus is central to the Christian story, Jesus has never left Christmas. It’s the rest of us that I’m interested in here.

You see, I’m quite sure that if we don’t need holy days, we do need holidays. We need the change of pace; something different from putting one foot in front of another, day after day. We need those interruptions that come only with the steady and reassuring turn of the seasons’ calendar. We need a time set apart that reminds us of holidays long ago, of all the ways this season has come into our lives. We recall where we were, what it was like; how we did it then.

And, holidays also bring to mind how, for all our memories and traditions, this year is different. This is a tension we live with: the seasonal rhythms that bring the holidays around yet again, up and against the way our own lives, and the world around us, have changed over the year. Per-

haps this is the year a dear one is missing from the family gathering. Or the year that Occupiers huddle in the cold on Christmas Eve. Maybe this is the year the presents we give come from the thrift store, because there is no money to buy something new. These are markers for the ways we change, and are changed. Making sure we pay attention to these differences each and every year helps to orient us in the whirl and blur of life.

I remember the Christmas I spent far from home, living in England; my first holiday away from my family. New friends made sure I was invited to their celebrations. I had sent presents home, and theirs had arrived. But when I woke up on Christmas morning, I felt an aching homesickness. As much as I wanted to be in England, studying and meeting new people and enlarging my life, I also wanted, at that moment, to be home. For as much as my family can get under my skin, a holiday without them was not as welcome as I had thought it would be. I missed them, terribly.

That’s the other thing about the holidays: they have the capacity to surprise us; to teach us something about ourselves that we need to know; and maybe even something we have resisted knowing. So may there be new lessons of this season – of unexpected generosity, buoyed hopes, boundless kindness – for each and every one of us this year.

Blessings,
Alison
acornish@uuma.org

Give Yourself the Gift of Giving

This year’s Unitarian Universalist Service Committee’s “Guest At Your Table” boxes have arrived and can be picked up at the meetinghouse. Please set a box on your table and make this holiday a season of giving, and of reaching out to others beyond your household’s doors. Every coin and dollar bill that is placed inside your box will help some less advantaged person in this world. Boxes will be available until January 31.



President's Letter

In a recent service, Jaki Jackson and I offered reflections on how Unitarian Universalism draws truths from sources both humanistic and spiritual. I'm reviewing some of my thoughts here, and Jaki will write about hers in the January newsletter.

I joined this congregation because I was attracted to the warmth of community here, and the yearning to serve the cause of justice. In this search for truth and meaning, though, I gradually sensed an intellectual and emotional tension. Some of us seemed to be looking for faith and spirituality. Others seemed to cringe at religious words like grace, spirit, and even God, wishing for more emphasis on here-and-now concerns.

This tension is not unique to our congregation. One of the major controversies in early 20th century Unitarianism was between the theists and the humanists. Theists wanted to preserve our historic belief in a transcendent God, while humanists wanted to eliminate all reference to the supernatural. But I believe there's a middle way that is both spiritual and humanistic.

Personally, I've come to reject the idea of a separate supernatural world, which keeps me from taking holy books literally. I also reject the notion that science can explain everything, which keeps me from siding with those whose humanism excludes all religion. There's a gap between what the technical language of science can tell us and what reality is, in its awesome totality. It's in that incompleteness of knowing—not in some separate world of being—that I look for the spiritual. However, there is a hidden dimension to the one world we do inhabit. Paul Tillich, the great 20th century theologian, called it the dimension of depth.

This hidden dimension appears in many great religious traditions. Some of the medieval Christian mystics spoke of God as a "cloud of unknowing." Buddhism teaches that words can be useful on the road to enlightenment, but once that state is achieved, words are no longer needed. Or as Taoism puts it: the Ultimate that can be spoken is not the true Ultimate.

If words fall short, can we approach the dimension of depth through faith? To answer that, we

must understand the meaning of faith. We might think of faith as belief in truth claims that we can't prove, but if the dimension of depth is beyond description,

then any statements about it are meaningless. Another, older meaning of faith captures what we mean when we say that someone is faithful, as a faithful wife or husband. This form of faith is defined by what we do, not by what we believe. This is embodied faith, a faith that employs not just our rational minds, but also our hearts and the innermost recesses of our intuitive selves. Such faith can pry open the hidden dimension.

How might we express embodied faith? Creative arts and spiritual practices can help. But as the great religious traditions tell us, the one great way is love. Jesus, St. Paul, Hillel, the Buddha—they all said this. So let us live out the meaning of these words on our wall:

We act against exclusion, oppression and violence.

We nurture the health of the earth.

We strive for peace in our hearts and in the world around us.

If we do these things mindfully, honestly, and regularly, truth and meaning will seep into the marrow of our bones. When fear strikes, we will conquer it with love. We will become, in the fullest sense, a spiritual community. We will also be a deeply humanistic one.

Peace,
John Andrews
candrews40@optonline.net



December Service Calendar

Services are on Sundays at 10:30am

December 11

The Blessing of Being a Heretic

The Rev. Alison Cornish

Musician: Lysbet Rogers

Unitarian Universalism has sometimes been called "the religion made of other people's heresies." It's a proud heritage, but what happens when we depart from the well-trod path? We will honor the UUA's Association Sunday with a special collection to support this year's denominational priorities.

December 18

Holy Cow! Profile in Courage

The Rev. Alison Cornish and RE Program

Our service draws as its title a headline from *People* magazine, and offers a teaser about our holiday intergenerational service. The compelling true story of Emily, the cow, helps the holiday story come alive in a new way.

December 24, 4:00 pm

Christmas Eve

The Rev. Alison Cornish and Worship Associates Pat Gorman, Tuna Flores, Edna Trunzo, Sue Penny

Musician: Peter Weiss

Please join us for our annual candlelight Christmas Eve service - all are welcome.

December 25

Surprised By Hope

The Rev. Alison Cornish

On this Christmas morning, we gather in a participatory service to share our understanding of hope in our own lives, and in the world around us.

January 1

Embracing Promise

Martha and Mark Potter, Chris Epifania

Musician: Megan Chaskey

When our world seems cold and bleak, we need to look a little harder. The New Year's Day service will find the promise of a New Year in the barren landscape of winter. We will gather around our Earth Mother statue and listen to a story of the earth's promise, followed by a walk in the Long Pond Greenbelt looking for signs of sustenance, hope and rebirth. The walk will be followed by a warm brunch in our fellowship room.

Service Date	Set Up/ Greeters	Hospitality
Dec 11	Brolin	Epifania/ Jacobsen
Dec 18	Mason/ Jacobsen	Potters
Dec 24	Truitt	
Dec 25	Jackson	Need Volunteer
Jan 1	Thurman	Epifania

Want to help out on an occasional basis? Everyone new to these positions can count on having a veteran partner. To volunteer, please speak to Jeanne Wisner at 631-208-8154, jkwisner@optonline.net

Upcoming Events Unless noted, events are free, open to all, and held at the meetinghouse.

Sunday, Dec. 11, noon

Qi Gong. Learn to love your body in winter with the strength, warmth and balance of Qi Gong, the ancient Chinese art of breathing and movement. Free and all are welcome.

Thursday, Dec. 8, 7 pm

UUCSF Board meets. Visitors welcome.

Thursday, Dec. 8, 4:30-6 pm

Reading Group: final meeting on Jonathan Sacks' *The Dignity of Difference*, at Temple Adas Israel, Elizabeth Street, Sag Harbor. Questions? Contact Alison, acornish@uuma.org (631) 804-7850.

Saturday, Dec.17, Community Winter Solstice Celebration

4 pm - Labyrinth Walk (free), led by Linda Mikell
6 pm - Potluck Supper by candlelight, bring a dish for 6 people.

7 pm - Winter Solstice Ceremony, with drumming and community dancing. Suggested donation: \$10 for adults, \$2 for children. More details on page 1.

Carolyn Willberg May 2, 1936 - September 16, 2011

Alison led a memorial service and celebration of Carolyn's life, in early October, on Shelter Island, where for six years she had made her last home.

Untroubled by the ferry commute, Carolyn had been deeply involved with UUCSF, serving as Treasurer on the Board and as chair of the Site Beautification committee. She organized the fundraising and hands-on efforts that created our Remembrance Garden. Often her own hands worked shovel or wheelbarrow, earning the awed respect of other gardeners who weren't dealing with cancer treatments and their aftermath.

Being Carolyn, she dismissed any notion of awesomeness, although she once told Alison that "the two hardest things I've ever faced in my life" were the diagnosis of her own lung cancer and her husband Cal's frontotemporal dementia. Even so, she made no more of her monthly shuttle to Cal's life-care facility in Ohio than she did of the necessary ferry to Shelter Island.

At the memorial service, a friend illuminated the Willberg marriage by telling us that Carolyn, when asked what five things she'd take to a desert island, answered, "My husband and a string quartet." Many others spoke of Carolyn's kind thoughtfulness and competence. One friend told of a meeting they'd attended, late in her illness, to plan 2012's events for Shelter Island's library: "She wasn't able to give more than an overview, but what she said was fruitful." A member of her Sharing Circle, stuck in bed with her own illness, told how Carolyn had come to sit with her one afternoon, book in hand, to read whenever either felt like it. Another UUCSF friend spoke of Carolyn's care in assuring frequent drinks of water while they worked together in the Remembrance Garden.

Carolyn's daughter, Kyle, drew on the "it takes a village" idea of Hilary Clinton, "a woman who rivals my mother in her drive, ambition, and ability to shush people who are talking out of turn." Caro-



lyn's time on Shelter Island made Kyle "discover that it takes a village to make a life meaningful and complete. When my mother came to Shelter Island she didn't know anyone outside of the family. By her doctor's best guess she had only 18 months to live. And she was struggling to cope with my father's illness. In spite of all this, she was determined to put together a life for herself, in whatever time she had left. It is to my mother's credit that she threw herself into every activity the community

had to offer that held her interest, but it is to the credit of every one of you in this room that her plan worked - even better than expected."

At the close of these contributions, Alison reminded us that "Carolyn's imprint is quite literally in the ground at UUCSF - the flagstone path leading to our new Remembrance Garden is laid out to her stride. Walking those stones, we can recall Carolyn's embodied energy, can-do-ness, and yes, fire. Carolyn was full of fire, and each of us here likely experienced that in some manner: as passion, fury, energy, determination; as judgment, in conflict. It was there in her cross-country skiing, and in her orderliness and systematic organization; her voracious reading, and in classical music; in loyalty and affection; in living, against odds. In all, there has been fire; and a very bright light."

Margaret Logan
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UUCSF's Newest Member



Helen Fitzgerald, who joined our congregation on November 6, says that she was, until the age of thirty-five, a very compliant Roman Catholic, her heritage through her Irish ancestors. She married a Catholic, and they set out to have a very large family. They talked

about six, and had eight children. They were happy, unquestioning and felt superior, church-wise, belonging to the one true church. She recalls their being naïve, smug, and certain. What happened?

The large family struggled to buy a house in Massapequa, and Helen spent the next twenty years mothering, as well as reading, thinking and questioning. She taught Christian doctrine to high school girls for eight years, but realized that she could no longer parrot rules and dogma. She became involved in a Discovery program which trained her to teach an inductive, experiential, non-doctrinal program. Its purpose was to help students raise their own faith questions.

After Helen and her husband separated, she needed to make more money, and began doing outside sales for Pitney Bowes. She liked sales, but it was a stressful job and entailed a lot of driving. Caring for eight children, with the youngest only seven years old, left her exhausted. She tells the story of seizing a moment to wash her hair, but emerging from the shower, found that one of her youngest sons had taken off. Despite such difficulties, Helen even managed to serve as president of the parish Rosary Society.

The tragic loss of one of her children, who had struggled with mental illness, motivated Helen to work for social justice for marginalized people. And by 1968, she was infuriated by the Church's intransigence in forbidding use of the birth control pill, even for a woman who had had eight children by the time she was thirty-five. She joined AAUW, and served as president of her local organization for several years; she embraced feminism and attended

retreats at her Alma Mater, the College of New Rochelle. In time, she felt further alienated from the Church by its suppression and invisibility of women. Helen's journey to finding our worship community was gradual, over the course of time, as her earlier beliefs crumbled from the center.

But Helen still admires Catholics on the left: Father Dan Berrigan, who at eighty-five often protests the inaction of the UN; and Father Roy Bouergeois, a Maryknoll priest, who has advocated for women's ordination, even when faced with losing his pension and support. She is proud that Catholic Charities espouses the cause of immigrants.

In 2008, The Long Island Progressive Coalition honored Helen as the Long Islander who made the most difference. She has been a passionate advocate for affordable housing in East Hampton, promoting both Windmill and Whalebone Landings. She has served as an ombudsman for seniors in nursing homes: interviewing them, eliciting their problems, and fighting for them. She has testified before the Suffolk Legislature on behalf of illegal immigrants, organized health care services for the poor and elderly, and protested in Washington on numerous occasions. Presently, she serves on the East Hampton Board of the Housing Authority. Her one regret is that she cannot be in New York, participating in Occupy Wall Street.

Helen eventually found love again, and had five happy years with a man from Springs, where she continues to live. She still believes in sacraments, with a small "s," and in grace: happy to be rid of certainty and of triumphalism. She believes that everything in the universe veers toward life-giving relationships, including the paradoxical interaction of birth, death and rebirth. She views the world as a living organism, with creation as the primary revelation of the God she finds so difficult to define. She believes that she is held in the embrace of a loving, powerful mystery. In the time she has left, Helen strives to remain compassionate, to work for justice, to grow in love and to appreciate liberation. She is grateful for many things, but especially for the twenty-seven family members who recently celebrated Thanksgiving at her home.

Diana Lindley
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The Green Corner

The East End's overabundance of raccoons, possums, squirrels, mice, rats, voles and moles elicits caustic remarks from local residents. Such animals rarely threaten our lives, but we quickly move against them when they invade our homes or gardens. Yet, deer remain unchecked.

Try to imagine rodents that weigh 250 pounds at maturity, carry abundant ectoparasites and serve as vectors for vile and pernicious human diseases. Imagine a 250 pound vole working its way through your garden, or racing across the road at dusk in front of your speeding car. Wouldn't you expect local government to take steps?

Forty years ago, deer were something of a rarity, even out here. Hunting pressure succeeded in keeping the deer population at barely noticeable levels; visitors to rural parks and natural areas rarely saw deer. But over the last thirty years, the rapid suburbanization of large land areas has countered the palliative benefits of hunters. Who'd want a deer hunting season in their neighborhood? The herd responded predictably, and grew exponentially.

We now find more than four deer for each acre of habitat; quite a switch from a more-balanced natural herd with perhaps one deer per four acres. Browse-lines mar our forests, and even our backyards, with the destruction of our ornamental trees, shrubs and gardens. Deer pillage farm fields, laying waste to acres of newly sprouted corn in a single evening, unless stopped by deer-proof fencing. In natural areas, deer leave behind a sterile, well-



pruned world, from ground level to forty-five inches above it: the notorious "dead zone" characteristic of areas with too many deer. And this dead zone is not just esthetically unpleasing. It signals the slow death of the forests we know and love.

Over time, deer preferentially eat the seedlings and young shoots of native trees. Eventually, the only trees and shrubs growing up in the aging woods of the East End will be the deer-resistant ones; species not native to Long Island. Our forests will one day consist only of weedy trees with a European or Chinese pedigree; or, at best, a mix of native species and exotics. How this will change our whole suite of native biota is largely unknown, but all indicators are that it will be detrimental.

The impact of all this is not without consequence to the deer themselves. East End hunters know that the average size of our deer is quite low compared to that of a healthy, lower density herd. But hunters can take relatively few deer per year. Each spring, those lost are easily replaced by fawns, with twins and triplets being commonplace here. Too many animals compete for too little natural browse. Smaller animals are less resistant to harsh weather conditions, disease and harassment by local canines.

Reflecting back on those rats and raccoons, we don't tolerate them in our lives and homes for good reason: disease. Yet, deer-borne diseases, like Lyme and Babesiosis are a real and present health threat. In studies of isolated islands rampant with deer vectored and tick-borne illnesses, the (not-so-simple) removal of the deer herd eradicated these diseases in ticks *and* human residents. And while

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Newsletter Information:
Deadline is the 15th of each month. E-mail copy, photos and events to Margaret Logan marlogan@optonline.net
Please start your subject line with "UU newsletter".

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Board Meeting Summary

Our new congregational accounting system is generating much more useful monthly reports. The Board of Trustees and committee chairs are now able to monitor the flow of funds more closely. The Board thanked Treasurer Imke Littman for her work in implementing this new system. Imke noted that our bookkeeper, Kelly Glanz, is doing an excellent job.

The board is planning a "Taking Stock" service/mini-retreat for Sunday, January 29. In part a celebration of paying off the mortgage, it will also be a chance to share dreams about where our congregation will be five years from now. Luncheon will be included. We'll be looking for volunteers to plan and implement this celebration.

Kent Martin, Secretary
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we might hear that mice carry the diseases that ticks deliver to us, science now verifies that deer are more often the real problem in the tick-borne disease equation.

Also, deer increasingly cause auto-related injury and death on our highways. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, there are about 1.5 million car accidents involving deer each year, with \$1 billion in vehicle damage, 150 human fatalities, and over 10,000 personal injuries. Add this tally to the suffering and loss of productivity caused by deer-borne disease, and it is clear that their population exacts a hefty cost from our lives and pocketbooks.

So, what's to be done? It won't be easy. Human attitudes must adjust to the truth. Cute as deer may be, they create a serious imbalance in our local natural system. Some natural or human force must

reduce their numbers to bring relief. Several methods suggested for controlling herd size range from deer birth control, to trap-and-relocate, to a "market hunt," where venison is sold for profit. Placing a bounty on deer might even do the job.

Unless the public is better educated, however, it is unlikely that such draconian measures will reduce the herd size here. We, and our local governments, must recognize that deer are too abundant; that they are "out of whack" with the world we live in. If enough of us call for sane control measures in the name of good sense, public health and safety, and the local ecology and economy, change might be possible.

Stu Lowrie
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Please note that the ideas and opinions expressed in this article are mine alone, and do not represent the policies, directives, or activities of the conservation organization that employs me.



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